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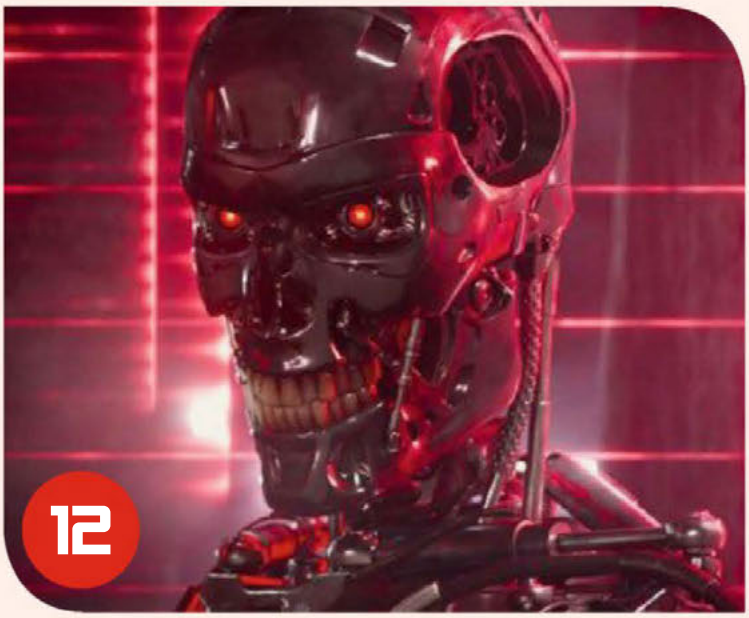

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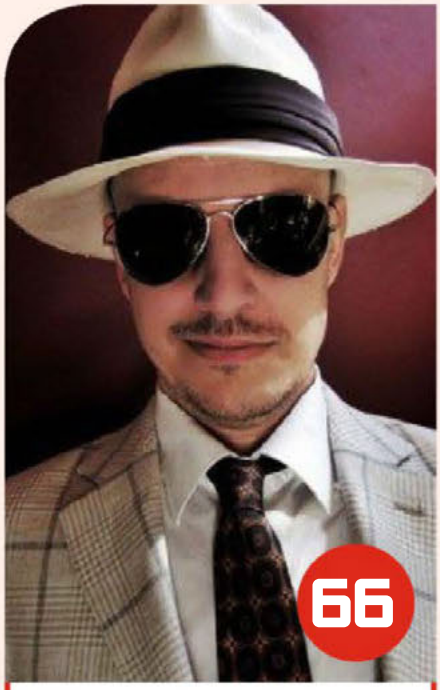

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STARBURST

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JULY 2015

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EDITORIAL

Welcome to STARBURST Issue 414!

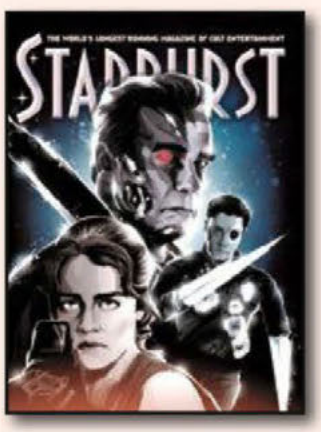
2015 has been a fabulous year so far for **STARBURST** with some amazing genre entries, and the return of some franchises that just refuse to go away. **The Terminator** and its myriad sequels and offshoots is yet another powerhouse that refuses to let a duff entry seal its fate permanently. Our appetite for Cameron and Schwarzenegger s love child appears to be as strong as ever as we prepare for **Terminator Genisys** with an issue that reacquaints us with the unstoppable killers from the future, examines the past, and has a look at what to expect from this latest instalment.

Very similar to my experience with **Mad Max 2**, I originally caught up with **The Terminator** on VHS. I was sold immediately. I was to then follow both Arnie and the franchise slavishly. **Terminator 2** kicked it up to another level, and I even have a soft spot for the third entry with its bleak ending. But with **Terminator Salvation**, I really thought that was the end. The movie was a pale shadow of the other entries, and Arnie and his pecs were only fleetingly present thanks to a cheeky CGI cameo. Happily for us, Arnie bankrupted California as Governor and has made good on his famous catchphrase. He is indeed back, and to celebrate his return we give you a trip through all things **Terminator**, and take a look at the big guy himself. Arnie and **STARBURST** go way back, and it would be rude not to have a look at the career of a genre icon.
I know Arnie is a big bloke but don t panic, we still made room for **Ant-Man**, **The Human Centipede III**, **Fantastic Four** and all of your regular treats are here as well.

Again don t forget to hang out with me and the rest of the **STARBURST** team Wednesdays 9pm until 11pm on the **THE STARBURST RADIO SHOW**, listen live exclusively on **Fab Radio International**, or subscribe to our podcast on iTunes. **STARBURST RADIO**, the greatest radio show in the universe (or so it says on the adverts we recorded). It s no good if you don t join in with us though!

Until next month.
Hasta la vista baby,
and keep watching the weird and wonderful,

Jordan Royce
EDITOR



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STARBURST MAGAZINE, PO Box 4508, Manchester, M61 0GY
or email: **letters@starburstmagazine.com**

STAR LETTER

COCK VS SOCIETY

[In response to STARBURST Podcast 5.17 when we discussed Simon Pegg going on record with the press saying that sci-fi/superhero movies were making us all stupid.]

Not content with his stream of ass-numbing rom-coms, his appalling bastardisation of Scotty in the STAR TREK movies, being little more than Tom Cruise s talking buttplug in the MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE movies and hanging around Highgate with that choir-voiced bellend from Coldplay, Simon Pegg (yes him) gives an interview to the Radio Times where he pontificates his concern that too many comic book movies are "infantilising" society.

I remember trying to impress my sociology class with a similar heap of half-cock twaddle (actually, forget the half) before scuttling off to watch the latest genre movie with no guilt whatsoever. I have no doubt at all that if Pegg had been cast in just one of the Marvel films (perhaps if his mate Edgar Wright hadn t been booted from ANT-MAN?), he would be sucking up a very different kind of sushi right now.

Mike The Cock Coldwell, via EMAIL

As you will have heard on the radio show, we agree with you on this matter, and you will have noticed that Pegg backtracked quite quickly when the backlash occurred. As much as we d like to give him the benefit of the doubt, it seems he may have outgrown his audience. #shitbagshuffle

COINCIDENCES IN FICTION

I continue to buy STARBURST with every issue - and, quite honestly, I am blown away by the coverage. I really enjoyed the MAD MAX-themed issue. I have always enjoyed the more esoteric and obscure films/TV/books/comics out there. And after reading about the many inspired by MAD MAX movies in #412, I am now off to search out some on DVD. Thank you.

I enjoyed your look at THE FAST AND FURIOUS - and other car-themed franchises. I think it d be so great to one day see an issue devoted to motorcycle and helicopter-themed fiction. As far as motorcycles go, we ve had TV shows like STREET HAWK and films like 1987's CYCLONE; and with helicopters, fans of rotor blades are well-represented by the likes of AIRWOLF and BLUE THUNDER.

Moving on, sir, I enjoyed your views on Bond/Blofeld being related in the next BOND film. You said the rot set in with Joker killing Bruce Wayne s parents in BATMAN. I do agree.

Personally, I don t enjoy this everything must be interconnected mindset. I like the idea of some bad guys simply being asses who wish to rob banks or take over the world. It adds absolutely nothing to a fictional universe for me when I hear that a bad guy is related to the hero due to being a brother of his cousin.

There were two 1980s cartoons I enjoyed: M.A.S.K. and DUNGEONS & DRAGONS. In M.A.S.K., the hero Matt Trakker and his team took on the combined forces of Miles Mayhem and his team. Later on, I read that Trakker might have been related to Mayhem. It didn t enrich anything for me. Nor did it improve DUNGEONS & DRAGONS when I learnt that the villain, Venger, may have been related to the heroic Dungeon Master. I even heard rumours in the 80s that Skeletor was going to be revealed as He-Man s uncle!

Having Bond be related to Blofeld does nothing for me. You put it best when you said that scriptwriters wanted to stretch things as far back as the womb. If people like it, more power to them, but before this mindset took hold, I never felt I was missing out. I simply enjoyed the good vs. evil battles.

I do hope we come full circle once again and go back to how things were. A good start, way back in 1986, was when the rebooted Superman universe did away with having Clark/Lex as childhood friends - and simply had Superman meet Luthor for the first time in Metropolis. I have no idea what current Superman continuity has to say.

Keep up the good work.

Stephen P, via EMAIL

We did an AIRWOLF feature last year in Issue 399 of STARBURST when the complete collection was released on Blu-ray. Perhaps there will be more to come, it s probably ripe for a reboot/remake/reset/prequel/intra-sequel/reimaging [*delete as appropriate]!

GREETINGS FROM BELGIUM

I ve been a reader of STARBURST since the STAR TREK: INTO DARKNESS issue. I wanted to write before to congratulate you with the excellent ROBOCOP issue, but I never came around to do so (but better late than never). The original ROBOCOP is one of my all-time faves. The Robert John Burke interview was hilarious! ROBOCOP 3 may be flawed, but Burke wasn t a bad RoboCop. He got a lot of negative comments for not being Peter Weller and for having to deal with a rather poor script. I also think director Fred Dekker did the best he could do with the script and budget that he had. As for ROBOCOP (2014): why so sssseriousssss? Stick to the silver suit! The silver reboot suit kicked ass! So what's the deal with the black Batman-wannabe suit? But me likey nonetheless.

The dino-erotica article in STARBURST #413 really took me by surprise. I had no idea such fiction existed! And I thought gay STAR TREK fan fiction written by women (who prefer to see Kirk and Spock getting romantically involved with each other instead of women because they can t stand them around women) was weird!

DOCTOR WHO seems very big in the UK, I think it's an impossible task to find a British movie/tv magazine that DOESN T cover the Doctor. However, it has a rather modest cult following in Belgium (but there is a Belgian Who fan site). As far as I know it isn t broadcasted in Belgium anymore. I remember watching WHO in the mid '80s as a kid. If you ask a person if he/she knows DOCTOR WHO it goes a little like this:

Q: Do you watch DOCTOR WHO?
A: Who?
Q: Yeah, that s the one!
A. ???

Thanks for your time!

Yves Kapreles, via EMAIL

Shauna says:* Thanks Yves, now I know exactly where to go on holiday for an escape from dreaded Dr Who! It will be nice and peaceful, and I can write some more STAR TREK slash fiction! "*Once upon a future time... on a lonely ship there was a strapping young officer whom one night was feeling...

Winner. Neil. Head over to www.starburstmagazine.com to enter this month's caption contest.

THINGS TO COME

A ROUND-UP OF THE BEST (AND WORST) OF THIS MONTH'S MOVIE / TV NEWS

Although not filming until September, Ubisoft Motion Pictures (the still-new production arm of the game developer/publisher) has revealed an impressive teaser poster for their movie version of the popular video game **Assassin s Creed**, set to star Michael Fassbender (**Prometheus**, **Frank**) and Marion Cotillard (**The Dark Knight Rises**), with Justin Kurzel directing. All three are also involved in the upcoming adaptation of **Macbeth**, so we could actually be in for a treat when the film hits screens towards the end of 2016.

DC

The DC Cinematic Universe has this month seen some updates on a couple of superhero movies that have been awfully quiet lately. Firstly, after being rumoured last month, James Wan has been officially announced to direct **Aquaman**. Wan, of course, is best known to genre fans for helming the likes of **Saw**, the first two **Insidious** movies, and **The Conjuring**. He s also recently directed **Furious 7**, a movie which took a baffling amount of cash at the box office. Wan will be working with a script from **300** and **300: Rise of an Empire** s Kurt Johnstad, with Charles Rovan, Deborah Snyder and Zack Snyder serving as producers. Aquaman himself will be played by **Game of Thrones** and **Conan** s Jason Momoa, with the character making his debut in next year s **Batman V Superman: Dawn of Justice** before his solo movie aims to make a splash on July 27th, 2018.

As for the other superhero movie referenced in that opening gambit, that would be **The Flash**. Despite Grant Gustin doing wonders as the Scarlet Speedster in The CW s **Flash** TV series, the DCCU Flash will be a completely different entity to the small screen Barry Allen. Ezra Miller has been long-confirmed to be playing the cinematic Barry, with **The LEGO Movie**'s Phil Lord and Chris Miller to direct. All has been mightily quiet on that front, though, but finally Lord has this month given an update on where things are currently at, saying that they are ***trying to break a story*** and how they re ***trying to carve out space for the movie that s apart from*** *[what we ve seen on the TV]* . If you ask us, it seems as if Warner Brothers has gotten into a pickle with this one. They want their cinematic Flash to be Barry Allen and they want it to be different to the television show, yet the TV show has done such a great job of being a near-definitive story of a modern-day Barry Allen that it s nigh on impossible to create a great Barry Allen movie without it having some serious things in common with the TV series. With that said, this was always likely to be a problem that would come up if Warners decided to make their cinematic Flash and Green Arrow different to Gustin s Sultan of Speed and Stephen Amell s Emerald Archer. Hate to say we told you so, but Either way, at present **The Flash** is set for a March 23rd, 2018 release, with the titular character also playing a role in Zack Snyder s two-part **Justice League**, and even rumoured to make a cameo in **Batman V Superman**.

In one final piece of big screen DC news, it looks as if James T. Kirk could be heading to the DCCU at some point soon. Yes, Chris Pine, best known for playing Kirk in the relaunched **Star Trek** franchise, is in talks for a role in **Wonder Woman**. Now there s two different stories on this at the moment; one suggests that Pine is in talks to play long-standing Wonder Woman love interest Steve Trevor in the Amazon's solo film, whilst the other rumours claim that he is actually being lined up to play Hal Jordan/Green Lantern. When Warner Brothers and DC revealed their upcoming cinematic slate, Green Lantern was certainly in the fold, with a GL movie lined up. Still, it has not been clarified which actual Green Lantern the DCCU will introduce. At this stage, it seems as if it s a toss-up between Hal Jordan and John Stewart. As for Steve Trevor, that role was one that was previously said to be Scott Eastwood s in **Suicide Squad**, although Eastwood s part in David Ayer's villain-centric flick has now been confirmed to *not* be Trevor. If Chris Pine does indeed end up in **Wonder Woman**, he'll be joining Gal Gadot on screen when the Patty Jenkins-helmed film is released on June 23rd, 2017.

Taking things to the small screen and there s some sad news. Yes, it s been an inevitability for the last few months, but **Constantine** has finally been completely axed. NBC chose not to renew the show a month or two back, but the hope was to find a home elsewhere. Sadly, that has not happened, and executive producer Daniel Cerone took to social media to break that news that the Matt Ryan-starring show has been completely canned. With Guillermo del Toro s **Justice League Dark** movie still just about in development, in an ideal world it d be great to see Matt Ryan s John Constantine pop up in that. That seems slightly wishful thinking though, and that s only if that movie ever actually happens! So with a heavy heart, we say RIP Hellblazer, thanks for the memories.

Whilst **Constantine** has sadly taken its last breath, **Supergirl** is a show in its infancy. Now confirmed for a full season order, it has again been reiterated that the series will have no crossovers with **Arrow** or **The Flash**. Starring Melissa Benoist as Kara Zor-El/Supergirl, the show certainly looked a tad ropey from the initial promotional footage shown. Still, the show has managed to sway a few of us here at **STARBURST** in the last couple of weeks, although the way in which it dodges the shadow of a certain Man of Steel looks as if it will get a tad tiresome rather quickly. We ll

have to wait and see how things pan out when **Supergirl** debuts in the second half of the year.

Over to Barry Allen, and after an explosive, action-packed finale, the powers that be have said that Season 2 of **The Flash** will indeed delve into the reaches of the multiverse. If, like us, you squealed like a fat kid presented with cake when Jay Garrick s helmet landed in Starling City, you ll be pleased to hear that there s a lot more to come from the Scarlet Speedster show. As well as Garrick, the season finale also gave teases to Caitlin Snow as Killer Frost, of a Flash museum, of Barry Allen in prison, and of a certain group of heroes and rogues known as **DC s Legends of Tomorrow**.

On that note, remember how an **Arrow** and **Flash** spin-off show was recently announced? Well, you guessed it, the show will be called **DC s Legends of Tomorrow**. With an extended trailer now available online, the show will feature Brandon Routh as The Atom (as in *proper* Atom rather than just Iron Man-lite), Victor Garber as Dr. Martin Stein, Wentworth Miller as Captain Cold and Dominic Purcell as Heat Wave. Caity Lotz's Sara Lance is (again!) back from the dead, this time taking on the moniker of White Canary, and there are new faces in the form of Ciara Renee s Hawkgirl (briefly glimpsed in **The Flash**'s season finale), Franz Drameh as Jay Jackson (believed to be the show s take on Cyborg, Black Lightning or Static Shock), and Arthur Darvill as time-travelling rascal Rip Hunter. The group will all have to team up to travel through time to stop the plans of the immortal Vandal Savage. Like **Supergirl**, **DC s Legends of Tomorrow** has been confirmed for a full season and will debut next year... and it looks like all kinds of fun.

Speaking of which, it wouldn t be a DC-based news piece without at least a quick mention of **Arrow**. Executive producer Marc Guggenheim this month revealed that Season 4 of the show will take a far lighter tone than what we ve seen in the three seasons to date. Whilst Season 3 seemed to finish on a remarkably happy note for the usually sour-faced Oliver Queen, it looks like Ollie s luck is continuing for the immediate future. We re sure there ll be still be bumps in the road, but it appears that **Arrow** is to take a leaf out of sister show **The Flash** s book. Whilst this last season of **Arrow** was good, it wasn t up to the standard of Season 2, and also didn t quite reach the highs of the mightily impressive debut year of **The Flash**. Let's see what Season 4 has to offer for Oliver and Co. AP

MEG

After years of waiting, it looks as if **MEG** is finally heading to the big screen. Steve Alten's **MEG: A Novel of Deep Terror** was released in 1997, and has spawned several follow-ups, with the action focusing on the 80-foot Megalodon and the tale often described as **Jurassic Park** with a shark" as the California coast is terrorised by this ancient threat.

A movie adaptation of **MEG** has been in development seemingly ever since the first book hit shelves, and at the last count, **The Manchurian Candidate** s Dean Georgaris had penned the most recent draft for Warner Brothers. Colin Wilson and Belle Avery have been on board for a while in a producing capacity, and it's now believed that Warners has intensified their search for a director as they look to make **MEG** a priority.

Disney initially picked up the rights to a **MEG** adaptation back in 97 for a sum of around $1 million, although were put off initially moving ahead with the film for fear of having to go up against 1999's **Deep Blue Sea**. After various names came and went on the project, with Guillermo del Toro even taking a look at it, the film was set for a 2006 release with an $80 million budget. Obviously that didn t happen, and again the project slipped into the murky depths of development hell before the rights reverted back to Steve Alten in 2007. And here we are, with Warner Brothers now owning the cinematic rights to **MEG**.

It s highly likely that the positive response to the giant underwater beast shown in the **Jurassic World** trailers has spurred Warners on, and the prospect of a big budget shark movie (even if it s a Megalodon) is a hugely appealing one to us here at STARBURST, it'll be a nice change of pace to see something different than tripe like **Two-Headed Shark Attack**, **Jersey Shore Shark Attack** and **Sand Sharks**.

Expect to hear more on **MEG** as and when it develops. AP

STAR WARS: THE FORCE AWAKENS

With the most anticipated film of the year less than six months away, Disney are still playing the teasing game when it comes to information. After the revelations at **Celebration** (see TTC #413), the only confirmed piece of news this month was the name of the character played by Andy Serkis. The mo-cap specialist will appear (after the tech wizards have replaced the Ping-Pong balls) as Supreme Leader Snoke. It's already known that it was Serkis' voice heard in the very first trailer for the film, released last November, but as to where he fits in with the rest of the story is anyone s guess for now. Which, of course, makes us all the more eager for it to be December. Christmas? Pah! That'll be such an anti-climax (or, more than usual, anyway).

BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA

Word on the street is that John Carpenter's 1986 flick **Big Trouble in Little China** is to be remade. Not only that, Dwayne The Rock Johnson, believed to be a huge fan of the original, is to play the lead role of Jack Burton, the iconic role played by Russell in Carpenter s movie. **X-Men: First Class** Ashley Miller and Zack Stentz are currently working on the script for the redo, with Johnson himself producing along with Dany Garcia and Hiram Garcia.

Johnson has already mentioned that he has *nothing but love and respect for the original*", and hopes even to bring in the horror master himself. Whether Carpenter has any involvement remains to be seen, but the response from fans has been mixed, to say the least.

Plot-wise, the original movie centred on Jack Burton, a trucker who winds up in the middle of supernatural shenanigans in San Francisco s Chinatown, and we can imagine the re-do will follow much the same path. AP

THE HUNGER GAMES: MOCKINGJAY PART TWO

As teaser posters go, this one s quite effective. The sense of the rebellion at the heart of the final **Hunger Games** movie comes to the fore, and is certainly heightening anticipation for Katniss and co. s return on November 20th.

Ridley Scott's eagerly-awaited sci-fi drama based on the book by Andy Weir began its promotional campaign with a **Prometheus**-style viral video, and this rather bland poster of a doe-eyed Matt Damon. Scripted by **The Cabin in the Woods** Drew Goddard, **The Martian** lands in the UK on November 27th.

MARVEL

Last month's TTC brought word of just who was in mind to play the Marvel Cinematic Universe s Spider-Man. At that point it was believed that **Ender s Game**'s Asa Butterfield was the frontrunner to nab Spidey s classic red and blue duds, but this last month has actually seen six names screen test for the MCU's Wallcrawler. As well as Butterfield, also present at the Atlanta, Georgia screen tests were **The Impossible** s Tom Holland (another name previously linked to the role), **Boardwalk Empire** s Charlie Plummer, **Red Band Society** s Charlie Rowe, **Pixels** Matthew Lintz and relative newcomer Judah Lewis. Marvel Studios Kevin Feige was present for the tests, as were **Captain America: Civil War** directors Anthony and Joe Russo, and Sony Pictures' Amy Pascal. It's believed that Butterfield is still the favourite to land the gig, and it s expected that an announcement will have been made by the time you re reading this. If so, here s hoping we ve got a worthy Webhead. Spider-Man will be making his MCU bow in the Russo brothers **Captain America: Civil War**, which is already shooting and is set for a May 6th, 2016 release, before then spinning off to his own solo movie on July 28th, 2017. Marvel Studios and Sony Pictures are working together on all Spidey appearances, hence why Amy Pascal is involved in the casting process.

On the topic of the first of the relaunched (again!) **Spider-Man** franchise, this past month has seen Marvel and Sony getting together to find a director for Spidey's first MCU solo foray. Drew Goddard, having previously been on board to write and direct **Sinister Six**, was believed to be in the frame for the next Spidey film, rumoured to be the first of a new trilogy titled **Spectacular Spider-Man**. Unfortunately for Goddard, he s now no longer in consideration. Instead, the names being looked at are **Warm Bodies**' Jonathan Levine, **St. Vincent**'s Ted Melfi, **Pitch Perfect** s Jason Moore, **Napoleon Dynamite** s Jared Hess, and **Vacation** s duo of John Francis Daley and Jonathan M. Goldstein. What s arguably even more interesting is that recent speculation claims that Oscar-winning Matthew McConaughey is the top pick to play the MCU s Norman Osborn, a role played by Willem Dafoe in Sam Raimi s **Spider-Man** trilogy and by Chris Cooper in Marc Webb s **The Amazing Spider-Man** series. McConaughey recently revealed that he has had talks to join both the Marvel Cinematic Universe and the DC Cinematic Universe, and Marvel is extremely keen to pin him down as their new Norman Osborn, a character best known for his Green Goblin alter-ego, but also one who plays a major part in the aftermath of the comic book **Civil War** event. Could something similar play out on the big screen? We ll have to wait and see.

Sticking with the MCU, there s a rumour doing the rounds that **Captain America: Civil War** will introduce *another* Hulk. Yes, with Bruce Banner having set sail for isolation at the end of **Avengers: Age of Ultron**, it s going to take something special to drag him back in to action alongside Earth s Mightiest Heroes. That special something is speculated as being the Red Hulk. What better way to grab Hulk s attention than by introducing a monstrous red rival? The Red Hulk is the alter-ego of General Thunderbolt Ross, and adding further fuel to this fire is the confirmed return of William Hurt as General Ross in **Captain America: Civil War**. And Ross is just one of a plethora of characters recently confirmed to be appearing in **Civil War**, with a new official synopsis for the film revealing that the movie's roster will be made up of Captain America, Iron Man, Ant-Man, Spider-Man, Black Widow, Hawkeye, The Falcon, The Vision, War Machine, Scarlet Witch, Black Panther, Winter Soldier, Agent 13, Baron Helmet Zemo, Crossbones and Thunderbolt Ross. Notable by his absence is Thor (although that could change), and notable by his inclusion is Paul Rudd's Scott Lang/Ant-Man.

And much like Ant-Man is yet to make his MCU debut (that s coming on July 17th), Doctor Strange is another character being lined up to join the cinematic Marvel realm. Whilst we ve known for a while that Benedict Cumberbatch will be headlining **Doctor Strange** (because, you know, he s in *everything*!), Tilda Swinton is in talks to play The Ancient One. Now the comic book Ancient One has generally been a male throughout the character s existence, and he s somebody who served as a mentor to Stephen Strange on his ascension to becoming the Sorcerer Supreme. Even in death, The Ancient One has still often been summoned to advise Strange when needed. Marvel was initially looking for a male actor for the role, but then decided to adjust the character from a he to a she. Swinton is no stranger to comic book movies, having appeared in **Constantine** and **Snowpiercer**, as well as being familiar to genre fans for **The Chronicles of Narnia** movies. At present, **Doctor Strange** is set for a November 4th, 2016 release.

Still with us? Good, for we have one final piece of MCU news, with much-praised **Selma** director Ava DuVernay in demand to helm an upcoming Marvel Studios movie. DuVernay is currently under consideration to direct either **Captain Marvel** or **Black Panther**. The studio were looking for a female to direct **Captain Marvel** and an African-American to helm **Black Panther**, so DuVernay ticks both of those boxes. With Chadwick Boseman playing T'Challe, Black Panther will be making his MCU debut in **Captain America: Civil War** before getting his own July 6th, 2018 movie. As for Carol Danvers, **Captain Marvel** is currently set for a November 2nd, 2018 release.

Flipping over to 20th Century Fox s Marvel properties, Hugh Jackman has now finally revealed that the upcoming third **Wolverine** movie will indeed be his last outing as Logan. The plot details of the film are being kept schtum at the moment, but Jackman claims that it is *the perfect way to go out.*" Here s hoping we get some sort of play on the Old Man Logan arc. What? We can hope, right? As well as **Wolverine 3**, there s still talk of some form of Wolverine appearance in Bryan Singer s **X-Men: Apocalypse** and also in the Ryan Reynolds-starring **Deadpool**, which itself finished shooting this month and has us all tight in the pants with excitement. **Wolverine 3** is currently set for a March 3rd, 2017 release and will see **The Wolverine** director James Mangold returning for this final Wolvie outing.

In terms of **X-Men: Apocalypse** news, as well as this month confirming that we will finally see James McAvoy's Charles Xavier going bald in that movie, director Singer has revealed that Caliban will be appearing in the film. Comic book-wise, Caliban is a Morlock, whose main ability is that he can essentially track mutants, almost acting as a GPS system.

He s also famous for taking on the ominous mantle of Death in Apocalypse s Four Horsemen. Chances are that something similar plays out here when **X-Men: Apocalypse** is released on May 27th, 2016. And whilst that film will bring a close to a trilogy that also includes **X-Men: First Class** and **X-Men: Days of Future Past**, this month has seen 20th Century Fox announce plans for a new spin-off movie called **The New Mutants**. **The Fault in Our Stars** Josh Boone has been brought in to direct, being deemed *uniquely suited to tell this story about young characters*" by producer Simon Kinberg. Back in 1982, Chris Claremont and Bob McLeod created the **New Mutants** comic book focusing on a group of lesser-known teenage mutants in training. The core group of the book comprised of the likes of Blink, Warpath, Sunspot, Dani Moonstar, Magik, Wolfsbane and Cannonball, although there would at times be appearances from Professor X and other more familiar faces. It's expected that **The New Mutants** movie will pull from the comic book source, although no release date or further details have been given as of yet.

Taking things over to small screen action, with Marvel s Netflix-exclusive **Daredevil** now confirmed for a second season, Rosario Dawson s Claire Temple, essentially the show s version of Night Nurse, will be returning for Season 2. Whilst that is good news, more interestingly there s a story doing the rounds that claims Marvel are making eyes at Jason Statham to play the show s Bullseye. For the eagle-eyed out there, there was the briefest of brief teases of Bullseye during **Daredevil** s debut season, and the character is a one of the Marvel s world most lethal and brutal assassins and marksmen. As well as taking great pleasure in his work, he was also the rogues responsible for killing the Guardian Devil's "one true" (of which he has a few) Elektra in the comic books, running her through with her own Sai. The Stath would certainly be an interesting choice to play Bullseye, and whilst it's a little out of left-field, we're actually kind of on board with it if he does indeed end up landing the role of one of Daredevil s most famous villains. **Daredevil** is set to start shooting Season 2 later this month, with a return planned for next year.

In some rather brilliant news, whilst **Agent Carter** has now been confirmed for a second season in the US, the show has finally found a UK home for us Brits to watch Season 1! FOX UK has secured the rights to the show, and we should see the Hayley Atwell-starring show debut in July. Story-wise, the action picks up after the events of **Captain America: The First Avenger**, with Peggy Carter having to deal with the death of Steve Rogers and struggling in the male-dominated S.S.R. (essentially a prototype S.H.I.E.L.D.). As well as Atwell, Dominic Cooper is back as Howard Stark and there s the intriguing prospect of James D Arcy as Stark s faithful butler, Jarvis.

Elsewhere in Marvel TV land, **Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.** has unsurprisingly been renewed for a third season, although there's some bad news for one other show. Last month, Marvel had plans to do an **Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.** spin-off show focussing on Nick Blood's Lance Hunter and Adrianne Palicki's Mockingbird, but that show has been completely scrapped before it even got off the ground. No reason has been given for this decision as of yet, but there are still, however, plans for *another* Marvel TV show from John Ridley that will be a *reinvention of an existing superhero character.*" No more details are known at this stage, though. AP

STAR TREK BEYOND

Director Justin Lin has been teasing some nuggets about the third of the rebooted **Star Trek** films. He promises the story will finally get going properly into the realms the fans want, *They haven t really gone on their five-year mission, so what we experienced in the TV show hasn t been touched on yet. That sets up an opportunity for exploration and the deeper you go, the more you are examining humanity. Those are the things that I absorbed as a kid and hope to tap into and embrace and celebrate.*" He adds, *It s all new and fresh. The Klingons, Romulans and other species are great, but it s time to go further. It has been fun to focus on creating whole new worlds and species.*"

Certainly sounds promising. We can find out when **Star Trek Beyond** hits cinemas on July 8th, 2016.

AND FINALLY...

Jurassic World director Colin Trevorrow will not be returning to helm a follow-up, should one be made (let s face it, it probably will be), stating, ***Jurassic Park** is like **Star Wars**. Different directors can give a different taste to each movie. I would be involved in some way, but not as director.*" Holding out a New Hope for that other franchise, Colin?

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Fans have wanted **Hellboy III**, Guillermo del Toro has talked about how he wants **Hellboy III**, and star Ron Perlman has also previously talked about how he wants **Hellboy III**. With Perlman currently enjoying a peak in popularity thanks to **Sons of Anarchy**, the actor is looking to use his position to try and get a third **Hellboy** off the ground.

Taking to his Facebook page, Perlman said, "*Anybody out there wanna see **Hellboy III** as much as I do? Let s get this muthafucka trending, y all! Let s end the trilogy; we earned it!*" If that s not enough to stir the studios into action, we don t know what is.

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It was on, now it s off. **TRON 3** is dead. Despite apparently having director Joseph Kosinski back and actors (including Jared Leto, Garrett Hedlund and Olivia Wilde returning, and Cillian Murphy expanding his **TRON: Legacy** role of Edward Dillinger) lined up, the project has been pulled by Disney. Fingers crossed that they change their minds

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And to end on better news, we can all sleep soundly again following the news that David Lynch will, in fact, be returning to **Twin Peaks** after all. After a dispute reportedly over budgets, the auteur famously left the project. It s also been announced he will be directing each of the new episodes himself.

TTC 414 WAS WRITTEN BY ANDREW POLLARD AND MARTIN UNSWORTH. EDITED BY MARTIN UNSWORTH

horrorchannel

A round-up of what not to miss this month on Horror Channel...

JUNE 25th - ALMOST HUMAN (2012)
The debut feature from Joe Begos is a love letter to the feel of the classic '80s horror film. Gory, funny and creepy.

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JULY 1st - ASYLUM (1972)
What's not to love about the old Amicus portmanteau films? The all-star cast includes Richard Todd, Sylvia Syms, Herbert Lom, and the stalwart Peter Cushing, and based on stories by Robert Bloch. There s no reason not to watch.

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JULY 13th - ILS (THEM) (2006)
Terrifying French home invasion film that will have you behind the couch, let alone on the edge of your seat. Check the locks on your door when it's finished.

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JULY 17th - CRAWL OR DIE (2014)
We featured director Oklahoma Ward in Independents Day in Issue 407, and now s your chance to catch his acclaimed claustrophobic film, still not available on DVD or VOD in the UK!

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There s still plenty more to enjoy if you have a more delicate palate, with Classic **Doctor Who** continuing; serials this month include Tom Baker in **Genesis of the Daleks**, **The Ark in Space** and **Planet of Evil**, Jon Pertwee's **Planet of the Spiders** and **Death to the Daleks**, and Peter Davison taking his turn in the TARDIS for **Frontios** and **Snakedance** among others. Jessica Alba returns in **Dark Angel** and there s another chance to catch the mini-series **Stephen King s The Langoliers**.

Horror Channel is available on SKY 319, Virgin 149, Freeview 70, Freesat 138 and TalkTalk 487.

COME WITH ME IF YOU WANT TO LIVE...AGAIN

BY JOHN TOWNSEND

TERMINATOR GENISYS

PREVIEW

WE LOOK FORWARD TO THE FIFTH INSTALMENT OF THE TERMINATOR SERIES AND TRY TO IGNORE THAT RIDICULOUSLY SPELT TITLE...

In 2007, The Halcyon Company acquired the rights to the Terminator franchise and in 2009 released the fourth film to bear the prestigious name. With generally poor reviews and badly received by a disappointed public, Terminator Salvation delivered only marginal returns when set against the huge $200 million budget. Halcyon filed for bankruptcy the same year. In 2011, the name was picked up again, this time by Skydance Productions, who two years later announced a new film. This was to be the first in a revamped trilogy that would stand alone from the previous films while still including many of the well-known characters and retaining much of the mythology. That film was to become Terminator Genisys.

The plot of this new film has been the cause of great debate and some consternation amongst fans. The initial premise seemed to suggest that the timeline in Genisys would emulate that of James Cameron's 1984 original classic, The Terminator. In 2029, the human resistance fights bravely against an artificial intelligence known as Skynet, which is hell-bent on wiping them out. One of the fighters, Kyle Reese (this time played by Jai Courtney) is sent back in time to protect an unprepared Sarah Connor from a relentless Terminator dispatched to kill her. Sarah's destiny, one the machines hope to change, is to bear a son, John, who will lead mankind in the battle against Skynet.

In Genisys, this timeline would appear to change dramatically from the moment Reese finds himself back on Earth. This time Sarah Connor is less the nave victim and more of a well-trained soldier, ready and prepared for these events with an arsenal of weapons stashed away. It also seems that in this new past, so to speak, a reprogrammed T-800 (one of the early Arnold models) raised Sarah when her parents were killed some years before, teaching her everything she would eventually need in order to survive. This unlikely family unit must now evade a straight-off-the-production-line T-1000 on a mission to kill them all, as well as one other Skynet joker card that we'll get to later.

Firstly, though, let s deal with the changed timeline. When appointed, screenwriters Laeta Kalogridis (Shutter Island, Alexander) and Patrick Lussier (Drive Angry) knew they faced a challenging problem. Given the regard in which Cameron's first two films are held, and that in many ways they redefined action cinema, how do you pay respect to the legacy while still reinventing the franchise for a new audience? There was also the thorny issue that the last two films didn't live up to this almost unachievable standard. The solution would seem to be the new timeline which allows them to pick the best parts from previous films and meld them into a new story that still retains some essential familiarity. It also allowed them the opportunity to bring back the franchise's most notable player: Schwarzenegger. The former Governor has never made any secret of his desire to play what is surely his most iconic character one more time and adjusting the timeline and on-screen history presented that chance.

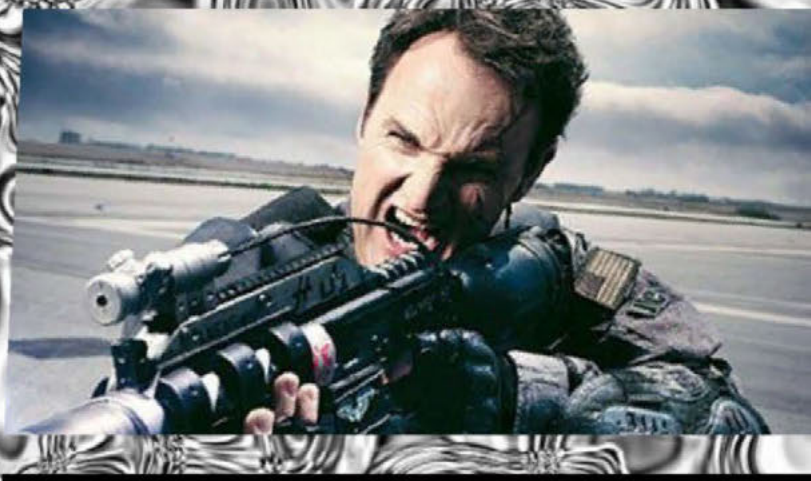
This brings us to the rest of the casting. Bringing the big man back could prove to be both a risk and a blessing depending on your point of view, but they do seem to have found a way around the unavoidable

effects of the ageing process. Cameron himself claims to have 'advised' that although the skeleton and workings of the Terminator are entirely synthetic, the skin itself is organic and would age as normal. Unfortunately, while a big robot still kicking around with more than 30 years of exemplary service under his belt was now feasible, new actors would be required for the other main roles. Game of Thrones actress Emilia Clarke has stepped into Linda Hamilton's formidable shoes as Sarah Connor, and early footage seems to show her channelling her predecessor s Terminator 2 period, working the all black, gun-toting look reminiscent of that film. Jai Courtney, who seems very much at home in franchises (The Divergent Series is ongoing, although it would be reasonable to suspect that A Good Day To Die Hard may have killed off that particular series), steps into Michael Biehn's stolen Nikes as Kyle Reese (rumour has it the sportswear giant has made some exact replicas specially). This impressive cast is rounded out by Jason Clarke as John Connor, Byung-hun Lee as the T-1000, and former Doctor Who Matt Smith in an as yet unknown but reportedly key role.

In the director's chair is Alan Taylor who, although being most renowned for work on Game Of Thrones, demonstrated the ability to deliver on the biggest scale of all by helming Thor: The Dark World, and is therefore no stranger to pressure from fans and studios alike. All the components would seem to be in place to make Genisys a success then.

What appears to have fired up the debate, both positive and negative, is the last trailer. In it, Jason Clarke as John Connor appears in the present, says hi to mom, and then proceeds to try to kill her. The footage then shows Connor as a Terminator himself, a newly manufactured human-cyborg hybrid, or a T-3000 according to the amended cast list. This revelation throws up some unavoidable questions. Firstly, which timeline is the Connor-minator (apologies) actually from? If it is the same future that saw Kyle Reese sent back to the present, then why would a Skynet minion be trying to aid the resistance? And more importantly, which future does he originate from? Secondly, and more interestingly, why reveal what is surely the main plot twist in the trailer and then showcase it for over a minute? Does this mean the producers are not entirely convinced by the film's previews and are showing their hand early in the hope this draws in the audiences? Or do they have something else even more shocking to reveal when the film is released? Whatever the answers may be, and assuming there actually are some, this trailer has had the desired effect of getting people talking about the film. Whether the filmmakers can pull off what now appears to be a complete reboot rather than simply an amended timeline is something that will become clear in the coming weeks.

One other thing to consider in all this is that Skydance Productions have set release dates for Terminator 6 and Terminator 7. Although listed as still at the 'pitch' stage, May 19th, 2017 and June 29th, 2018 have been provisionally reserved for the new trilogy's other two films. The interesting footnote to this now common practice of announcing release dates before a script has even been considered is that according to copyright laws in the United States, the rights to the Terminator series will return to their spiritual father James Cameron in 2019, some 35 years after the first film was released. Although clearly a



good business move by Skydance, as the public's appetite for more Terminator-based properties would surely be waning after three films in four years, it was said by the screenwriters Kalogridis and Lussier that Cameron gave his blessing to the new film, albeit from a safe distance. Given that he is also somewhat pre-occupied with Avatar and an abundance of sequels for the foreseeable future, it is extremely unlikely he would ever consider a return to the franchise. Perhaps this is nothing more than a show of confidence from a company used to handling tentpole productions, being behind both the Star Trek and Jack Reacher films. It does make an interesting by-line though.

One thing for certain is that Terminator Genisys faces a challenge to establish itself as one of 2015's big hitters, and also to provide a sound base for those planned sequels. With Furious 7, Avengers: Age Of Ultron and Mad Max: Fury Road already leading the way at the box office, and Jurassic World still to come before Genisys is released; plus Ant-Man, Mission: Impossible – Rogue Nation and Fantastic Four waiting in the wings, the competition is ferocious. Will today s cinemagoers still turn up for a franchise that began 30 years ago, and has been tarnished by the last two additions?

So very many questions to be answered. It is reassuring that from the cast through to the head of Skydance David Ellison, the right people are involved and share the same goal; to recharge a series that had flatlined following 2009's Terminator Salvation.

Who could have foreseen that when Schwarzenegger uttered that famous line in his monotone, slightly awkward English, that he would be delivering it again some 30 years later? Once again, he's back.

TERMINATOR GENISYS explodes onto UK cinema screens on July 2nd.

CSM-101

DEMONS WITH STEEL HANDS

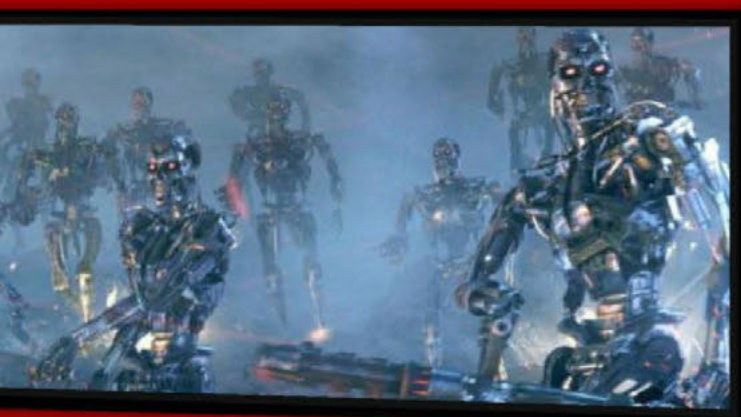
TERMINATOR AT THE MOVIES

BY JR SOUTHALL

When Star Wars was released, the landscape for mainstream science fiction had been barren for the better part of two decades. Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey had been only a sleeper hit, and although the late 1960s and early 1970s had produced a spate of apocalyptically calamitous futures – mostly featuring Charlton Heston – the first film in George Lucas' ongoing series had created a new playing field. Two years later, Ridley Scott's Alien took some of the tropes of the 1950s sci-fi boom, modified them for fans of visceral modern horror, and gave the whole thing an art-house feel on a blockbuster budget. The immediate aftermath was a string of so-so space chillers with indifferent special effects, mediocre casts and unremarkably familiar plots. And the post-1977 explosion of stargazing cinema teetered on the brink of collapsing.

Scott's next film took place in a dirty, crowded tomorrow similar to the one in Heston's Soylent Green, but with a more realistic, lived-in vision of the future than had ever been committed to the screen before. Blade Runner might have performed poorly upon release, but its significance was almost immediately felt. At the same time, a new subgenre of antihero actioners was born. Australia's Mad Max made a star of Mel Gibson (its sequel achieving Stateside success under the name The Road Warrior), and Kurt Russell was playing similar characters in a host of John Carpenter movies.

In the real world, Bill Gates and Clive Sinclair's experiments with microchips would revolutionise home entertainment. The Internet was fast becoming a reality, the origins of its ubiquity already in place. 1982 was also the year in which John Milius cast Austrian bodybuilder Arnold Schwarzenegger as the lead in Conan the Barbarian, his disappointingly ponderous adaptation of the Robert E. Howard epic, and just a year earlier a young director by the name of James Cameron had begun his career with an ultra-low budget sequel to Joe Dante's cheap and cheery comedy horror Piranha.



The stars had aligned.

The Terminator was a somewhat modest movie and a bit of a risk for everybody involved. The sci-fi boom was showing signs of petering out, and the lead actor was barely recognised for his acting abilities. But Cameron made a virtue of his star's shortcomings by casting the rather wooden Austrian as a robot; the flatness of Schwarzenegger's delivery of "I'll be back" is legendary, because for once the lack of intonation is appropriate to the material. Arnie famously speaks only 58 words throughout the entire film; he was cast for his presence and Schwarzenegger has no shortage of that. The image of Arnie in stolen leather and Ray-Bans has become a bona fide cinema icon.

While graphic violence had been a staple of the horror flick in the aftermath of The Omen and Halloween, sci-fi audiences were more accustomed to ray-guns than real bullets. Plots generally took the likes of Frank Herbert's Dune and gutted them of anything that audiences might feel was too esoteric; even Blade Runner had dumbed its source novel down quite considerably. Rather than making compromises to try and achieve success, Cameron took the opposite approach – and ensured his film's success.

The Terminator deviates from typical exploitation flick expectations in the way Cameron bolts quite an intellectually rigorous idea onto a fairly basic action runaround, with the director emphasising the predestination paradox in an almost unprecedented way. He then builds a considerably more muscular entertainment around this foundation than action movies had previously tended to be, with dialogue almost as terse as the T-800 and characterisation that's as tough as the characters are tough-talking.

What really distinguishes The Terminator is the high octane, sinewy action itself. By the late 1970s, action cinema had become a largely self-parodic circus of aging stars pretending to be their stunt doubles, and while films like Raiders of the Lost Ark had provided a shot in the arm, it wasn't until Mad Max 2 that violence and action would collide quite so vividly. The Terminator bolts the testosterone fix of the George Miller movies to a hard-bitten, nihilistic impression of 1940s detective dramas, and in so doing creates a new genre all of its own; with the addition of the forward-looking industrial scientific aspects of Blade Runner, the tech noir thriller was born.

The Terminator was a reasonable financial success, spending two weeks at the top of the American box office in the late-October hinterland of 1984, but it was through the emerging home video market that much of its reputation was secured. So much so that after Aliens had reinforced James Cameron's status in 1986, and The Abyss proved only partially successful in 1989, Cameron was ready to return to the subject with a follow-up seven years after the original had been released.

In itself this was quite an unusual move, as at the time most sequels were generally released within two or three years of the original, in order to cash in on their predecessors' success. But domestic video now meant that films remained in the public consciousness for longer and had not only demonstrated an appetite for a Terminator sequel, but also secured Cameron a much increased budget with which to make it.

T2 is in many ways as much a remake of the first film as it is a continuation. As with Aliens, Cameron's approach was to take the same basic ingredients and essentially produce a bells-and-whistles variation on the theme – albeit developing the story just enough that fans of either franchise would be satisfied. But by the time Judgment Day went into production, Arnold Schwarzenegger had become a major star and this would result in a new angle for the franchise. The appearance of Twins and Kindergarten Cop would have made him incongruous as the bad guy in T2, but this was highly serendipitous for Cameron, as the addition of the T-1000 was what gave the sequel its energy and distinguished it from the original.

In The Abyss, Cameron had been at the forefront of new filmmaking technology, helping develop the use of CGI to augment the practical effects in his 1989 film. Robert Patrick's performance as the morphing, shape-shifting T-1000 made T2 the must-see movie event of 1991, the second time in Cameron's career that he had produced a sequel that had outperformed the original at the box office. But there is a lot more to the success of Terminator 2 than just the unprecedented effects and Arnie's turncoat Terminator.

Terminator 2: Judgment Day was Cameron's big breakthrough and possibly the yardstick by which we can measure the rest of his career; for the first time he had created a movie that didn't appeal simply to action fans looking for testosterone-fuelled macho kicks. It is the appearance of the ten-year-old John Connor (actually playing the role more like an adolescent) that broadened Cameron's reach into the lucrative teen market and helped rocket T2 to the top of the box office; with his friendly, funny robot sidekick and delinquent parent coming good, the central character of Connor made this follow-up a kind of "Disney-fied" Terminator – albeit with no concessions to the violence and graphic horror of Aliens and the original film. T2, with its final chase sequence lasting almost a third of the film's already considerable running time, was Cameron's crossover hit, expanding his appeal and ultimately leading to Titanic and Avatar. It also meant that the Terminator franchise was now no longer just a cult success but firmly in the public consciousness, and this would have a huge knock-on effect on how any further films would be handled.

Despite T2's success, the company that had produced it, Carolco Pictures, went bankrupt only five years later, and eventually the rights to continue the series fell into the hands of the company's creators, Mario Kassar and Andrew G. Vajna. Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines eventually arrived in 2003, almost two decades after the first movie, and given its provenance it is surprising how closely it sticks with the characters and concepts of James Cameron's films.

With The Terminator having dealt with the John Connor's conception and T2 having taken place during his childhood, T3 moved the story on to when Connor had become a young adult, and with the introduction of Kate Brewster consolidated the franchise's appeal to a youthful audience – an imperative in maximising financial returns when producing a movie that, regardless of its action and effects content, further developed a story that was every bit as involved and as grimly hopeless as Cameron's original. Despite the rather glossier look of the finished product, T3 counterpointed the energetic action of the previous film with a dark and valiantly pessimistic conclusion. Rise of the Machines might feel like an unnecessary entry in the series (which Cameron himself had considered complete after the first two movies), but the inclusion of yet another Terminator variation – the T-X – and finally a rendition of the apocalypse around which the time paradox stories had been built, meant that T3 justified its existence and scored another box office success, in spite of jumping through narrative hoops after the machines had failed to defeat mankind in 1997, the 'Judgment Day' identified in T2.

Further rights wrangles saw a fourth instalment released in 2009, this time in entirely new hands and the first in a proposed new trilogy set during the war between mankind and machine, rather than prior to Judgment Day. After additional legal disputes, the rest of the trilogy was never produced, and this is Terminator: Salvation's biggest problem; as the first third of a new narrative, it is by necessity an incomplete story, and Terminator: Salvation features a deliberately 'small-scale' plot by way of an introduction to the characters and situations that ought to have informed its two follow-ups. When they failed to appear, the fourth film was left looking like an underwhelming and rather irrelevant entry in the franchise. The first three Terminator films had each had to approach the series in different ways in order not to either contradict or simply repeat what had happened previously, but in doing so each managed to fashion a plot that was self-contained enough to appeal to new audiences. Salvation feels more like an independent story taking place in the Terminator universe; however, it still managed enough box office to ensure that further chapters in the story would be forthcoming.

By being set post-Judgment Day, Salvation was nevertheless a legitimate if less significant entry in the Terminator canon, and with each of the movies managing to bring a variation of tone and approach to the franchise, the Terminator films have, like the Alien films, remained consistently both compelling and valid. It remains to be seen whether Terminator: Genisys will match that approach, but with a lot riding on its success both financially and artistically, the forecast is good.

JUDGMENT DAME

STARBURST looks back to the small screen adventures of THE TERMINATOR's main protagonist.

by Dominic Cuthbert

For all James Cameron s flaws, he gave us his best work on the low-key and inventive story of *The Terminator*. But more than that, he introduced us to Sarah Connor, and her journey from vulnerable waitress to venerable badass. By the time *Rise of the Machines* rolled around nineteen years later, she was dead and John Connor was a bumbling vagabond. Love it or loathe it, Josh Friedman s *The Sarah Connor Chronicles* set the record straight. It might have been prematurely axed after only 31 episodes, but we take a look at the show s highs and its lows; the pivotal and the pitfalls.

Perhaps the show s greatest strength was putting an intellectual spin on the brilliant simplicity of James Cameron s cautionary sci-fi tale, and taking it in a completely different direction. It used the paradoxical nature of time travel to weave a new narrative, that made what came after Judgment Day obsolete: seeing how John and Sarah try and get one over on fate is compelling indeed, but as we ve seen, judgment is inevitable. By the very existence of the Terminators, that meant judgment day still happened and fate, it seemed, always conspired in the robots favour. Changing the setting from 1999 to 2008 was a stroke of genius for modern TV audiences, allowing a new generation a fresh entry point into the franchise. To think about it in comic book terms, it was a one-shot. This writer isn t alone in thinking that the best part of *The Terminator* is *The Sarah Connor Chronicles*, but that s not to say there weren t resounding problems from the get-go. But before we get that, there s plenty the show got right.

The plot and pace might have seemed impenetrable, but the cast across the two series was superb. Headed up by Lena Headey, whose understated performance added a real sense of gravitas to proceedings and at her best outdid Linda Hamilton. Headey manages to convey both the strain of the impending conflict, alongside the spikey relationship with her son. Not only is she trying to keep him safe, she s simultaneously grooming him to lead the human resistance. How her *Game of Thrones* co-star Emilia Clarke will compare is only going to flare this argument up again, but Headey did have the advantage of 31 episodes to Hamilton s two movies. You do the maths. Summer Glau also dominates the screen, having made a name for herself as the gifted but troubled River in Joss Whedon s *Firefly*. She has a cool credibility and icy disposition which lends itself beautifully to Cameron Phillips, the reprogrammed robot that future John sent back to safeguard his younger self. She conveys the sexual subtext with aplomb, leaving the question of whether she and future John were romantically involved ambiguous. She also quips as well as any other onscreen android struggling with the baffling nature of humanity. Stick her in a

room with Data and The Vision and let the hilarity ensue.

The weight of the show, however, rested on Thomas Dekker, who inhabited the character of John Connor as the reluctant hero and archetypal chosen one (more on that later). John s development is gripping, struggling with the weight of fatalistic responsibility and the inevitability of Judgment Day, while also trying to maintain a semblance of normal teenage life (which is tough if you spend your days hanging around with your mum and a reformed death-bot). From testy teenager to bona fide warrior by the second series, it s a natural and inspiring story. The supporting cast, too, was terrific, from Garret Dillahunt as Laszlo, Cromartie and John Henry, to Shirley Manson of Scottish alt-rockers Garbage as the chilling CEO and shape-shifting robo-sapien, Catherine Weaver.

One of the show s more subtle shifts in the TV format was to directly challenge tropes surrounding the chosen one formula. What cynics took to be syrupy high school drama was cunningly subversive, taking apart the conventions of TV and shaking things up, before shows like *Hannibal* came along and pushed the boundaries with how much explicit gore and nudity you could slather on screen. *TSCC* told a story of a boy destined to save the world, but was narrated solely by Sarah. She was the storyteller who voiced her fears and philosophies at the start and end of most episodes, rattling the archetypes and tropes la Joseph Campbell.

But for its many rights, there was plenty of wrong footing that led to the show s untimely demise. Credit is due to Fox for even giving it two seasons, but from the premiere episode, the ratings were poor and only got worse. This is due in no small part to its dense script which, while a masterclass in meditative slow-burning TV, made no concessions to casual viewers and only intimidated newcomers. If you weren t privy to the first episode, you were soon left in the proverbial dust. It even made fans work on the ultimate payoff, and if you are one of those that followed the show until it went under, you ll still be sorely missing any real resolution, despite the strength of the final episode *Born to Run*. With the fanatical fervour that surrounded *Lost* and *Battlestar Galactica*, it s surprising that *The Sarah Connor Chronicles* failed to court the same success. If the show had been released now, on a more appropriate network, maybe it would have found that crucial stranglehold. After all, we re inundated with slow-burn, dialogue-heavy shows from *Game of Thrones* to *True Detective*, each proving to be massive successes and cultural juggernauts. If *The Sarah Connor Chronicles* had been released in 2013, say, how much better would it have fared? It might have been a sleeper success on Netflix, or backed with the ham-fisted audacity of Amazon Prime, or it might have been axed all the same.

TSCC was musing, philosophical, weighty and doomed from the start. The name itself

was problematic, promising one thing and delivering something else entirely. It had little in common with *Terminator*, with none of the spectacular set pieces or heart-pounding action sequences, but nor was it strictly Sarah Connor s story. No, this was more obviously the formative years of John Connor. Though that s not to say, it wasn t at all about Sarah. It dealt with her trying to stop Skynet, become a saviour in place of her son and free him from that responsibly and peril, but if you wanted to look past John to her far more inconspicuous story, you had to work overtime.

Because of Friedman s master plan, in which the whole story arc was rigidly planned, the show wasn t subject to change, in the same way that *Battlestar Galactica* was, and routinely did. Character driven narrative is a natural bedfellow with sci-fi, and *TSCC* always put its characters first, so much so that individual episodes were often lacking. This, on top of a rocky start to the first season, only served to turn off viewers except the dedicated few. Online groups scrambled to save the show in an eleventh-hour bid to convince Fox, but the network axed it all the same. The last episode aired in April 2009, with *Terminator Salvation* hitting cinemas only a month later. Although they both shared the *Terminator* umbrella, they were polar opposites, and the financial success of the latter wouldn t have been nearly enough to save the show.

The Sarah Connor Chronicles is one of TV s real highpoints; complex, beautifully constructed and elegant. It tops the small screen annals rubbing shoulders with *Breaking Bad* and *The Sopranos*. Given that Friedman is currently co-writing the screenplay for *Avatar 2*, it s unlikely that he ll return to the show in the improbable event that it ever makes a triumphant return. But maybe we can send a robot back in time, and stop it from ever being axed.

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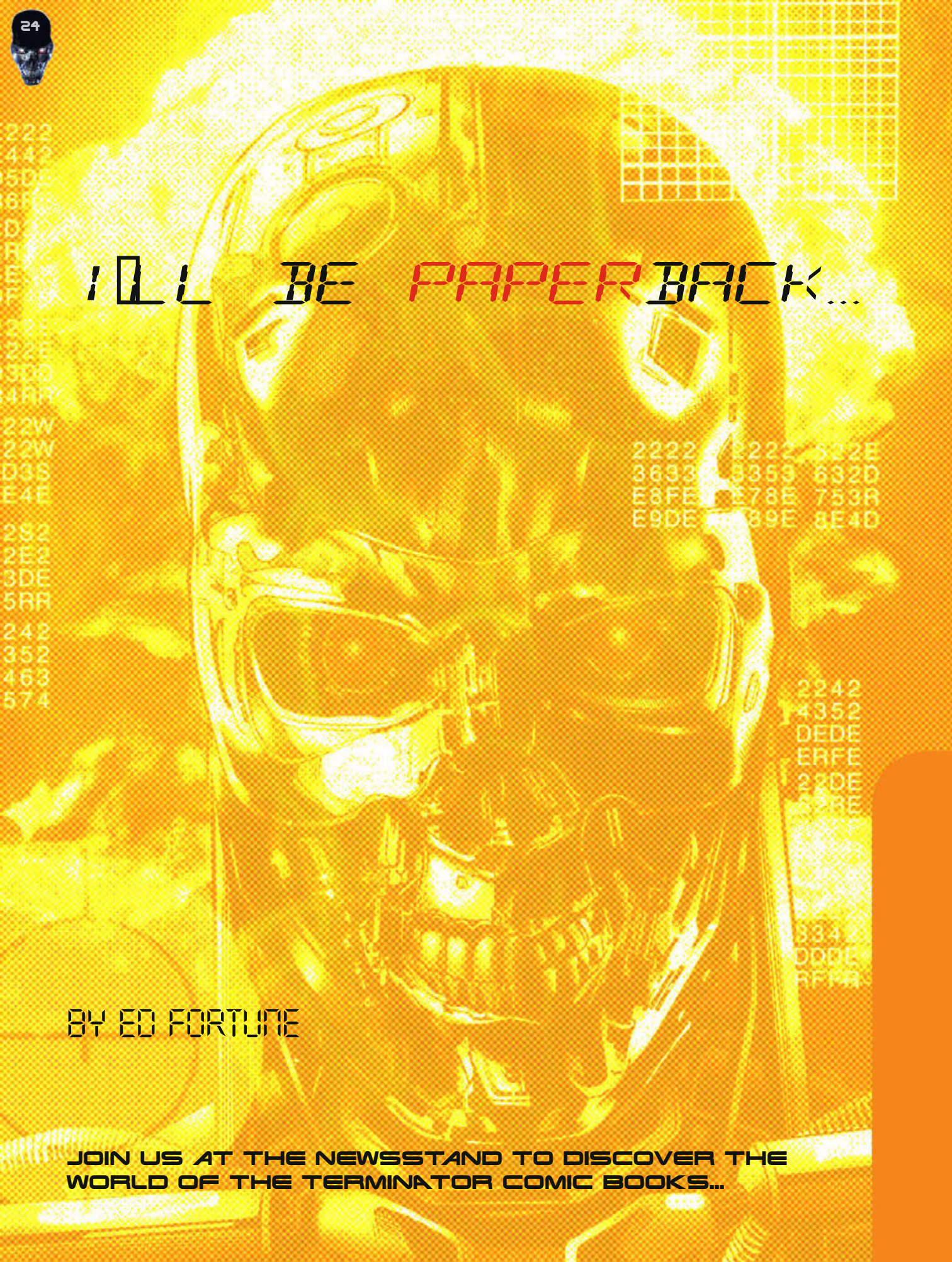
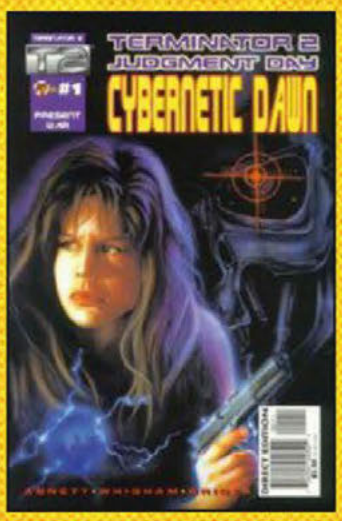

I'LL BE PAPERBACK...
BY ED FORTUNE
JOIN US AT THE NEWSSTAND TO DISCOVER THE WORLD OF THE TERMINATOR COMIC BOOKS...



Killer robots are a common comic trope; from Ultron to Brainiac, the funny pages are filled with pictures of machines breaking people into pieces. With its stark robotic skeleton and optional flesh dangling from various places, The Terminator is a great looking monster, and it's no surprise that there have been multiple attempts to bring The Terminator to the world of sequential art.

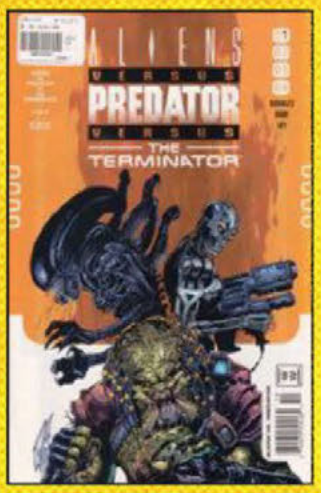
As you may expect, nothing that happened in the comics had any effect on the movies, which is a bit of a pity. As the silver-skulled horror passed through the hands of various publishers, it attracted a wide variety of creators who would go on to do big things.

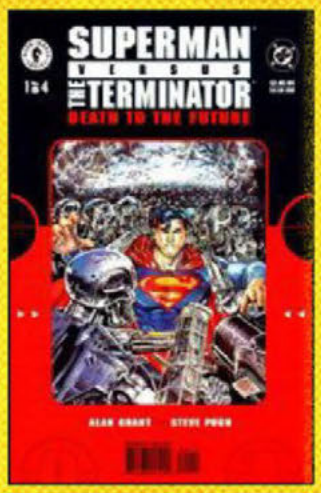
Looking to cash-in on the success of 1984's smash hit movie, NOW Comics launched The Terminator comic book in the late '80s. NOW specialised in low cost spin-off media, and, as a result, the book wasn't that good. The Terminators resembled cartoon skeletons with a silvery tint, rather than genocidal killing machines. They even managed to get the look of the emotionless skulls wrong, and every single infiltrating cyborg resembled Arnold Schwarzenegger, which kind of misses the point of a disguise. NOW redeemed themselves with 'The Burning Earth', which actually had a story that resembled the movies in some way. Despite being an early gig for Alex Ross, it was marred by the presence of the super-tacky Aurora Terminator; a leather clad sex-bot.

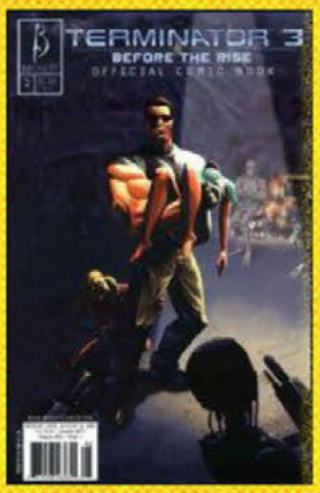
Marvel was up next with their adaptation of Terminator 2: Judgement Day. Inkwell Award-winning illustrator Klaus Janson pretty much phones it in on this one, as does writer Gregory Wright. Both the art and the writing fail to capture the spectacle that is the movie and it was roundly ignored by critics at the time. Malibu Comics would exploit the differences between Terminator and Terminator 2 to pick up the license for T2. They produced two books in the mid-nineties - Nuclear Twilight and Cybernetic Dawn. Essentially expanded retellings of scenes from the movie, the books did have some amazing covers.

The new film also gave Dark Horse a chance to slip in and work its magic. Dark Horse has an excellent track record of understanding what makes monster movies work and adding the infinite budget of the comic book to create something much better. Dark Horse would control The Terminator license from 1991 to 2013, and during that time would produce some great stories. The adventures did some smart things with the rules established in the movie, such as Terminators using (barely alive) humans to 'wrap' high-tech weapons, allowing these devices to be taken back in time. The Terminators were diverse and interesting-looking and worked well as brutal infiltration units. The story 'Secondary Objectives' was even translated into Spanish and went down very well indeed.

The stories also took a look at what happened to the rest of the world during Judgment Day; we meet the Russian version of Skynet, for example. Though the 'more than one Terminator went back in time' idea gets rather overused, Dark Horse kept it fresh throughout, and delivered some great revelations, especially towards the end of the series.







Dark Horse also specialises in 'event' comics. In addition to RoboCop Versus Terminator (which was an exercise in fanboy-style glee), we also got Aliens Versus Predator Versus The Terminator, which sounds like a movie pitch someone should get round to making soon. The plot mostly focused on Ripley and her alien-hunting antics. Obviously, she teams up with the Predators to beat up Aliens, but no one is really expecting Skynet's robotic minions to get in the way. Though messy, it's quite a fun tale, although it does have an awful lot of Ripley in it. Given that Dark Horse's biggest title was Aliens, this does make sense.

DC's only entry into the world of Terminator was in conjunction with Dark Horse. Superman vs. The Terminator: Death to the Future ran along fairly predictable lines. Lex Luthor backs the funding of Skynet, which promptly goes crazy and tries to end the world. Superman and chums have to fight increasingly more powerful Terminators in this tedious and repetitive story. Recurring villain and evil machine ghost Hank Henshaw arrives to make Skynet even more deadly, and Superman has to get involved with a bit of time travel to finally take out the robot overlord. It's well drawn, but the story is typical of '90s era Superman stories; which means it's quite dull.

By the time Terminator 3 rolled around, Dark Horse weren't terribly interested in producing the tie-in comic book. That honour went to ideas factory Beckett Comics. In addition to an actual adaptation of the movie, they produced three separate books that tied-in with the events of Terminator 3: Before the Rise, Eyes of the Rise and Fragmented. More were planned, but a decline in sales and Arnie deciding to run for office made it too difficult for the small business. Given that the comics were better than the movie, this is a pity.

IDW was the lucky publisher to handle Terminator Salvation. They got to produce the official movie adaptation and a prequel called Sand in the Gears. The striking artwork and a diverse yet compelling story showed the world that IDW can take any idea and make it shine. Alas, the comics fared much less well than the movie and didn't really sell. IDW still have the license for Salvation, although they haven't done anything with it recently.

The current keepers of Skynet are Dynamite, who are having a lot of fun with the license for Terminator 2. As well as the silly (yet appropriately violent) Pain Killer Jane vs. Terminator, they also roped in Transformers legend Simon Furman to produce two books: Terminator Infinity and Terminator Revolutions. The series introduces us to a new type of Terminator, one that can travel in time under its own power. Its mission is to 'fix' time. The result is a glorious clash of classic Simon Furman-style ideas, sure to bring a nostalgic grin to any fan of his work. As yet there has been no word on who is handling the tie-in book for Genisys. Given that the licences for each movie are handled separately from the last, it could well be that we get a glut of robotic killing machine comics. Time will tell, unless, of course, someone goes back in time and fixes them all.

THE OTHER TERMINATORS

The name 'terminator' is hardly unique; comic book writers are always looking for the next big bad and terminator is an appropriately frightening name.

Deathstroke the Terminator is the super-badass from the DC comics. Fans of the TV show Arrow will be familiar with Slade Wilson, but many may have missed his codename. There's a reason it's so convoluted; Slade started out as 'The Terminator', but after the runaway success of a Hollywood movie by the same name, DC moved to change it. He's now mostly referred to as Deathstroke, Slade Wilson, or if he's in your face, sir.

'70s Marvel super-hero Rom: Space Knight also had an ally called The Terminator. Even better, he was a cyborg. The history of Rom is long and convoluted, but in short, this character was a bit of a bad-ass and died taking out a whole pile of incredibly hostile aliens, so much so that Rom named his own son after him.

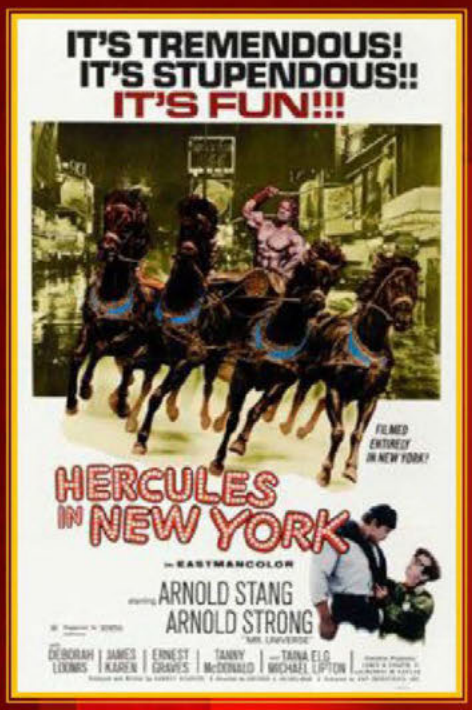
Nemesis the Warlock villain Torquemada called his army of murderous fanatics 'The Terminators' though the strip came out many years before the movie.

Staying with Marvel comics, an honourable mention has to go to Zoids; a toy tie-in produced by Marvel and written by none other than Grant Morrison. Specifically, Silverman; the seemingly sneaky company man who turns out to be a killer android. There are obvious parallels between the original Terminator movie and Silverman's unstoppable rampage, but for many children of the eighties, Zoids was the PG version of Terminator.

I TOLD YOU I'D BE BACK

by Robin Pierce

STARBURST looks at the career of ARNIE, the muscle-bound Austrian who has been a mainstay of blockbuster cinema for decades.



When you mention Arnold Schwarzenegger, it s always the iconic *Terminator* that springs to mind first, but this tour of his other genre films shows him to have been a mainstay of sci-fi and fantasy since the eighties. That s four decades, with a brief respite for his recurring role as The Governator of California. In that time, he has done it all. When he wasn't terminating, there was alien big game hunters, genetically engineered twins, a run-in with the devil, mythology, sorcery, clones, a pregnancy and more.

But it really started before the eighties. Like every politician, Schwarzenegger has a skeleton in his closet. Let's turn back time a little further and kick off with the mercifully little seen but never forgotten screen debut of our hero.

Before Conan, there was another mightily muscled cinematic strongman. The year was 1969, man walked on the moon, and a bodybuilder named Arnold Strong became *Hercules in New York*.

It s tremendous. It s stupendous. It s fun screamed the publicity poster, showing Hercules riding a horse-drawn chariot through Times Square. Um, no. It's none of those things. It's a squirm-inducing embarrassment that Schwarzenegger himself wishes he d never made.

Accurately panned as being one of the worst films in the history of cinema, it's a comedy about the socially awkward but physically superior Hercules, who leaves Olympus and becomes a pro wrestler, falls foul of his gangster manager, and finds love in a hectic 75 minutes before returning to his father Zeus, having learned a valuable lesson.

It's hard to believe that from such a humble cinematic acorn was born the invincible and charismatic star who in 1982 became the living embodiment of the Frank Frazetta paintings of Robert E. Howard's savage hero, Conan.

Conan the Barbarian was an origin story, and told the story of Conan from his capture and slavery as a child when his village was raided by the wizard Thulsa Doom (James Earl Jones) and his followers who slaughtered his parents, on to his adolescence as he toiled pushing a giant mill wheel which built up

his physique. Conan was then sold and trained to become a mighty champion pit gladiator who crushed his enemies, saw them driven before him and heard the lamentations of their women all in a day's work – before earning his freedom.

The film then centred on Conan's pursuit of Thulsa Doom and his snake cult, with his allies Valeria (Sandahl Bergman) and a magician. Sadly, Valeria met perhaps the strangest screen death we ve ever seen as Thulsa Doom straightens a serpent to rigidity and fires it from a bow, striking the warrior woman, killing her.

It didn't take very long at all for a sequel to get the greenlight, and in 1984, Richard Fleischer s *Conan the Destroyer* hit the screen, with Conan, still mourning the loss of his beloved Valeria, leading a bunch of misfit adventurers (including Grace Jones as the warrior Zula) on a quest to escort a young princess to restore a fabled horn, in return, the princess aunt will resurrect Valeria. It's a ploy, of course. The young maiden is unknowingly being escorted to be sacrificed. Conan saves the day and is rewarded by an offer of marriage; he declines and goes off in search of further adventures.

Well, he did, in a manner of speaking, and he didn't.

In *Red Sonja* (1985), statuesque Brigitte Nielsen, who was married to Sylvester Stallone at the time, took the title role based on another character from the books of Robert E. Howard, and was helped along by Lord Kalidor (Schwarzenegger), who in all was Conan in all but name for copyright reasons.

By 1987, Arnie was an A-List action movie star with a string of hits behind him as Hollywood embraced the unlikely meteoric rise of the poor Austrian kid who had become the world s biggest bodybuilder and now was conquering Tinseltown. *I ll be back* be damned Schwarzenegger was here to stay.

Predator took Schwarzenegger s tough Delta Force Captain Dutch Schaefer on a mission to rescue a government official taken prisoner by insurgents in Val Verde, only all is not what it seems. The mission is a setup, and in a plot that bears an incredible resemblance to the classic *Outer Limits* episode *Fun and Games*, Schaefer and his six man squad are being hunted for sport by a heavily armed alien who has an invisibility device and uses thermal imaging to target his prey with his lethal weaponry. The creature was a pre-CGI triumph from the Stan Winston studios and became a staple of his own franchise.

Here s a thought, a lot of genre fans are celebrating that it's 2015 – the year that *Back to the Future s* Marty McFly came to from 1985. They really should be more concerned with what happens two years from now when public executions become the subject of a TV reality show called *The Running Man*. Once again framed, this time for opening fire on unarmed innocents in a food riot, innocent ex-cop Ben Richards

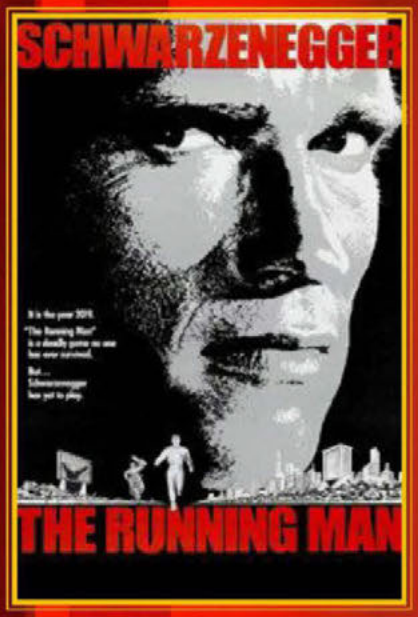
HERCULES IN NEW YORK

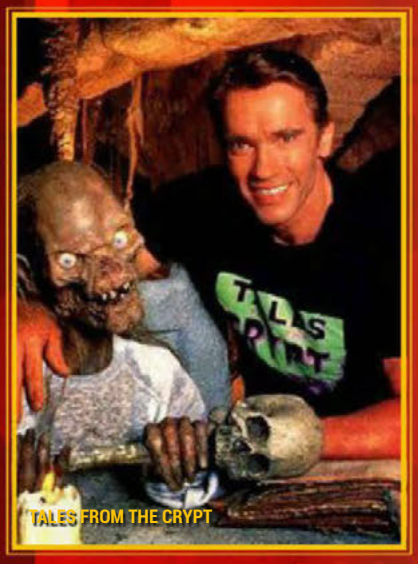
RED SONJA

PREDATOR

PREDATOR

THE RUNNING MAN





(Schwarzenegger) is sent to run for his life against a variety of colourful opponents armed with buzzsaws, generators, and flamethrowers in a contest where you must survive the run, to earn your freedom. (Needless to say, nobody has yet survived).

Well, Schwarzenegger did and went on to co-star as Danny DeVito s unlikely but genetically engineered twin brother in Ivan Reitman's 1989 comedy *Twins* before starting the nineties off with a bang.

Tales from the Crypt was a horror anthology TV series, based on the infamously lurid EC comics of the fifties. Each episode was introduced and closed by the rotting, skeletal Crypt Keeper with the exception of one an episode titled *X-Con* was not only directed by Schwarzenegger, but co-introduced - as the Crypt Keeper was upstaged by Arnie as himself.

In *Total Recall*, we were taken to the year 2048, as construction worker Dennis Quaid is experiencing some disturbing nightmares about a woman he meets before dying of asphyxiation on Mars. Naturally, his wife Lori (played by Sharon Stone) is not happy with this. Once again, Arnie is being set up. He has had his memory wiped, because he s really an agent named Hauser, on a mission to infiltrate the resistance to Martian governor Vilos Cohaagen s monopoly on providing fresh air to the planet. As his memory returns, there s only ONE man who can provide a breathable atmosphere on Mars, and that s Arnold Schwarzenegger!

1993 saw a rare flop in *The Last Action Hero* when Schwarzenegger played, well, Schwarzenegger in a film that parodies the action movie genre and all its clich s by taking the cinematic Schwarzenegger (as cop Jack Slater) out of his fictional film realm of surviving explosions, gunfire and improbable car chases and putting him in the real world where every bump and scrape actually hurts. There's even a meeting between the cinema Arnie and real Arnie in a film premiere. Unfairly written off, it s actually not a bad film, just perhaps a little overambitious.

Following the audience apathy for *The Last Action Hero*, a hit was needed – and fast. Schwarzenegger and director James Cameron pulled this feat off in style in *True Lies*, a 1994 comedy adventure film which revived the suave superspy genre, largely dead since Bond misfired his *Licence to Kill* in 1989. Schwarzenegger plays Harry Tasker, a Bond-like superspy who undertakes black ops missions in glamorous locales except Harry is a married family man whose wife and daughter are convinced he s a computer software salesman, and possibly one of the most timid and boring men in the world. Tasker's double life catches up with him and his family when terrorist Aziz, who is smuggling nuclear warheads to further his cause, kidnaps Harry s wife and daughter, forcing Harry into explosive action, ensuring that the Florida Keys and downtown Miami will never be the same again.

That same year, Arnold would re-team with Ivan Reitman and Danny DeVito for *Junior*, where he became the world s first pregnant man thanks to a fertility experiment. Becoming pregnant at the hands of Danny DeVito, however, wouldn t be the most undignified occurrence of Arnie's career. That would be reserved for 1997's *Batman and Robin*. This is indeed the Dark Knight s darkest cinematic hour, as well as the Austrian Oak's low point. Schwarzenegger s clumsy portrayal of Mr Freeze is a travesty of miscasting from start to finish. Where to begin? The overabundance of neon in every scene? George Clooney trying to outdo Adam West's sixties incarnation of Batman? The awful lines like *You re not taking ME to de cooler ?*

To hell with it and to hell Arnie almost went in 1999 as the onrushing millennium promised *The End of Days*, when Satan (Gabriel Byrne) would rise from hell and father a child on Earth. This was Schwarzenegger's first foray into horror, starring as suicidal, depressed, alcoholic ex-cop, Jericho Cane an atheist since the murder of his wife and daughter. Becoming involved in the case when he s hired to protect an investment banker who is shot by a priest, Cane must find the girl who was anointed at her birth twenty years earlier to become mother of the devil s child before the anxious father-to-be does. Satan, meanwhile, is roaming New York in human guise, closing in on his target as the clock ticks down to midnight on New Year s Eve 1999, in a surprisingly effective horror thriller that still packs a punch despite its topical setting now being fifteen and a half years out of date.

Only Arnold Schwarzenegger can tell the devil himself to go to hell.

Still on a biblical theme was the title of 2000 s *The 6th Day* referring to the creation myth. Question – how can you improve an Arnold Schwarzenegger sci-fi movie? Answer – have TWO of him! In *The 6th Day*, the mighty Austrian plays Adam Gibson, a helicopter charter pilot who accidentally meets a clone of himself, living his life, in his home, with his wife and daughter even enjoying HIS birthday party. Meanwhile, those who have cloned him need to get rid of the original. Replacement Technologies have been involved in the business of illegal cloning, worse, illegal clones with an inbuilt expiry date. To make matters more difficult, Gibson needs to sort this out with the help of the clone without his wife and daughter ever discovering there was a clone.

Some of the family not being who you think they are and Schwarzenegger s flight from all he knows and trusts, effectively becoming isolated, is very reminiscent of *Total Recall s* Earth-set sequences, but again it s a well-made sci-fi thriller with some surprising twists.

I ll be back was the promise and now he is!

TOTAL RECALL

TRUE LIES

BATMAN AND ROBIN

JUNIOR

THE END OF DAYS

THE 6TH DAY

THE 6TH DAY

As we ve seen, Arnold Schwarzenegger has faced just about everything in his legendary film career. Everything, that is, apart from a zombie apocalypse (though he almost came close to being the last human in a world of vampires when he was rumoured to be starring in a remake *of The Omega Man* back in the nineties). This year's *Maggie* brings the zombie apocalypse to Arnie s door, but if you re expecting something like *Conan vs. The Walking Dead*, you re in for a real shock.

The world is in the grip of a disease that turns its infected victims into cannibalistic zombies. Arnold plays the father of a young girl who is infected. As the final days approach, he decides to stay with her until the end. Early word on the film has been positive and we understand that this is not an action film, but rather a restrained, vastly dialled back performance by the star, who shows genuine sensitivity in his performance as a grieving father. In the role of the daughter is Abigail Breslin, who made her debut in M. Night Shyamalan's *Signs*, and has also appeared in *Zombieland* and *Ender s Game*.

Stripped of his iconic array of heavy weaponry, action sequences, puns, wisecracks, and catchphrases, we look forward to seeing what happens when the ultimate action hero has to deliver a dramatic performance with emotions rather than explosions.

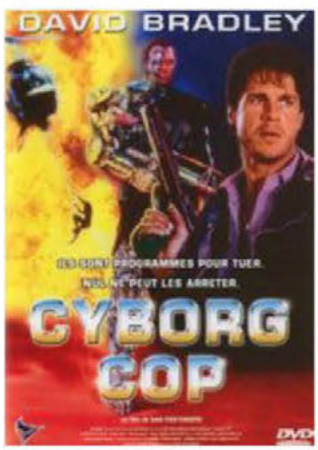
MAGGIE is released in UK cinemas on July 17th. See our review on page 80.

THAT SON OF A BITCH STOLE MY PARTS!

Like many hit movies, THE TERMINATOR inspired not only sequels, but bargain basement knock-offs. Join us as we look at the best of the worst, in no particular order of dreadfulness...

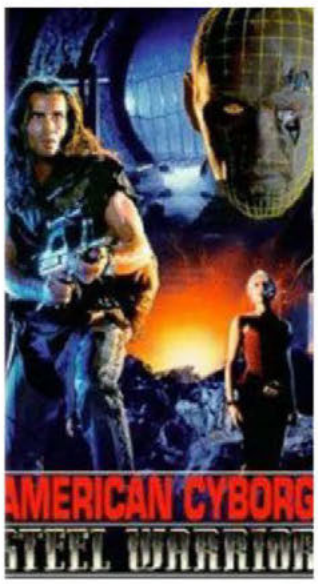
CYBORG COP (1993)

With a premise of a mad scientist (played by Indiana Jones buddy John Rhys-Davies) creating unstoppable killer cyborgs you d think you would be onto a winner. Sadly not, though with this *Terminator/RoboCop* mash-up. But then, what would you expect from Sam Firstenberg, the director who brought us such classics as *American Ninja* (1 and 2!), *Delta Force 3: The Killing Game* and, erm, *Breakdance 2: Electric Boogaloo*? Rhys-Davies overacts like a good un and the robo-men are more wooden than metallic, but there s lots of fun to be had, including an awesome fist-through-the-head scene! Still, it spawned two equally-ropy sequels.



AMERICAN CYBORG: STEEL WARRIOR (1993)

Post-WWIII and the AI have taken over the world. With mankind sterile, one solitary woman has a baby that must be protected. But there s an android assassin in hot pursuit ready to try to stop them making it to the safer confines of Europe. Starring Joe Lara, who looks like he s just walked off the set of *Highlander* (via a frontman stint in an 80s metal band) it s just the right side of bad, and was directed by the guy who gave us Israeli sex comedy *Lemon Popsicle* (and its remake *The Last American Virgin*, which was re-issued last year from Arrow).

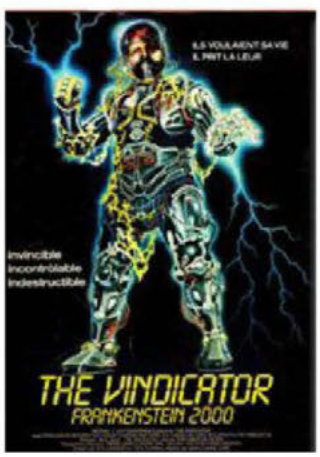


EVE OF DESTRUCTION (1991)

Ren e Soutendijk may have had an iconic appearance in this 90s video classic , but it doesn t stop the story of a scientist and her crew (led by Gregory Hines) tracking down her android/walking bomb doppelg nger before it explodes in the middle of Los Angeles being a complete dud. Remarkably, it was made by MGM with a budget probably higher than most of the films on this list put together, but it still fails to ignite. The director Duncan Gibbins is better known for pop videos (including George Michael s *Careless Whisper* and Bananarama s *Robert De Niro s Waiting*) and sadly died aged 41 after suffering 95% burns attempting to rescue his cat from a burning building. The cat was fine.

THE VINDICATOR (1986)

Despite being retitled (from *Frankenstein 88*) to cash-in on Cameron s hit, this tale of a man who s turned into a robotic killing machine through a special weapons project is more like a template for the later *RoboCop*. Directed by *Visiting Hour* s Jean-Claude Lord, and starring a pre-comeback Pam Grier, despite boasting a Stan Winston-created cyborg suit, this turkey has all but disappeared from circulation. Trust us, you re not missing anything.



TRANCERS (1985)

Charles Band s rather fun entry is a cut above the rest of this list, although still very much possessing bargain basement values. Jack Deth is a law enforcer in the year 2247 who has to travel back in time to apprehend a criminal who has taken over the body of one of his ancestors (via some mumbo jumbo drug concoction). It s mad as several bags of frogs, and spawned (geddit?) five full sequels and a thirty minute entry, which was made in 1988 and set between the first two films. It was originally meant to be released as part of an anthology called *Pulse Pounders*, which never saw the light of day.

LADY TERMINATOR (1989)

Foreign markets have always been a source of quick knock-off features - who could forget the infamous Turkish *Star Wars*, *Dünyayı Kurtaran Adam*? Well, this Indonesian effort eschews most of the recognisable traits of big Arnie's film, save for the cash-in name and some OTT action. The titular female isn t from the future, but she does attempt to kill a girl, only for a guy with an amazing mullet to try to stop her. Which, to be honest, is actually quite fun in an Oh my god, how 80s sort of way. It's definitely worth watching for a giggle.

DARK ANGEL (aka I COME IN PEACE, 1990)

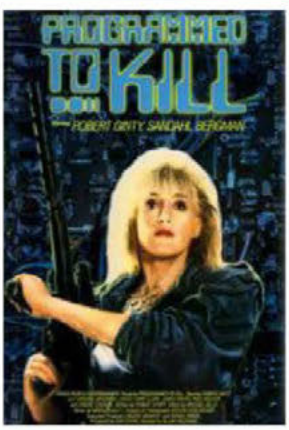
Dolph Lundgren plays a cop who s on a mission to clean up the streets of Houston of the drug dealers who killed his partner. Unfortunately for him, the main new threat isn t local in fact, he s an alien who has a large needle attached to his hand to shoot people in the head with heroin. Not the most obvious of rip-offs, but certainly takes a massive influence. Director Craig R. Baxley was responsible for the classic Carl Weathers film *Action Jackson*.

TC 2000 (1993)

Set in the obligatory post-apocalyptic world, in which the humans have ruined the environment and the well-off have retreated to a nicely stocked underworld. Above the ground, the rest of civilisation is left to fend for themselves. Protecting the powerful in their underground lairs is a team of Tracker Communicators the cybernetic-enhanced TCs of the title. There are also some reanimated TCs who have been turned into high-powered fighting machines, with one that may be able to repair the ruined conditions or destroy the survivors, dependent on the orders it s given. It s as terrible as one could imagine, but the video art did feature some particularly fetching homo-erotic imagery as well as the standard *Terminator* silver font.

THE TERMINATORS (2009)

This list wouldn t be complete without something from The Asylum, who have made a living (although the films seem to go straight to the pound shops) knocking out cheap rip-offs faster than Del Boy. The question that should be asked about this entry is not why, but why did it take them so long to think of doing it? Although the poster art and title suggest it s a run-through of the Arnie film, it's actually more like *Battlestar Galactica* meets *Westworld*, with the cyborgs hacked to go haywire and begin killing people. Jeremy London (*Mallrats*) is on hand to save the day, but can t save this awful dross.



PROGRAMMED TO KILL (1987)

Now here s a half-decent curio Sandahl Bergman (*Red Sonja*) plays a middle eastern terrorist who, after being captured, is given a makeover to be a half-cyber assassin. There s a graphic autopsy/transformation and some appalling casual sexism, but, hey it was the eighties! *The Exterminator* himself, Robert Ginty is on hand to stop things when they inevitably go wrong.

by Animal Johns-Connor

(SKY)NET WORTH

By Jack Bottomley

Ahead of GENISYS, STARBURST unearths the terrific, the terrible and the crazy merchandise that emerged from THE TERMINATOR franchise

The machines rose from the ashes of the nuclear fire. Their war to exterminate mankind had raged for decades, but the final battle would not be fought in the future. It would be fought here, in our present." Scary stuff and perhaps with all our advancing technology and those condescending self service tills, we are almost ready for the war of the machines to commence. However as *Terminator: Genisys* is on the horizon, ready to kick ass, change history (spoilery trailer: talk to da hand) and take bad spelling to a new level, we focus on a war that has already begun, the war of the merchines . Ever since Arnie swapped his Conan loincloth for a leather jacket and became the stone-faced robot in disguise in James Cameron's sci-fi classic, the franchise has undergone constant upgrades and become a formidable and somewhat unexpected force in retail. So here at STARBURST we look to get on the right side of Skynet before it s too late and see what *Terminator*-inspired produce was worth travelling back in time for and what deserved to be hasta la vista d as soon as possible.

LCD VIDEO GAME

(Tiger Electronics, 1984)

The *Terminator* franchise has seen the release of numerous video games over the years from Bethesda Software s *The Terminator (1990)* to Atari s *Terminator 3: The Redemption (2004)* but a few of you out there may fondly recall the addictive fun to be had with Tiger Electronics handheld LCD Terminator Video Game. Very basic by today s standards (what wouldn t be?) but an enjoyable point-based shooter for 80s kids who wanted to lead the resistance and blast some machines in the process. Although the weapons swapping system and specific enemy vulnerabilities means some strategy is involved. Thumb with glee if you want to live.

HOMERNATOR TOY

(Mexican Toys, 2014)

Now we all know what to expect when we hear the word bootleg , it is a word that summons frightening images of immobile toys, knockoff dolls, laughable box titles and items that are about as faithful to the brands they pinch as *Inglourious Basterds* was to the history of WW2. However, every now and again, a convention breaker comes along and such is the case with this unlicensed toy line from Mexican Toys on eBay, which sees models of *The Simpsons* Homer Simpson in the style of various other movie characters. Among the collection is JokerHomer, HellHomer, ChewHomer and of course this cool design of The Homernator. There is something indescribably fantastic about seeing the patriarch of The Simpson household in sunglasses and a leather jacket. Rainier Wolfcastle vs. The Homernator anyone?!

TERMINATOR 2 BIOFLESH REGENERATOR PLAYSET

(Kenner, 1991)

In 2009, Playmates released an advanced version of a toy (The Cyberskin Generator) that allowed kids to graft and then tear the skin from a terminator model (to tie in with McG s *Terminator Salvation*) aww bless. However the toy that originated this idea was the grandiosely titled Bioflesh Regenerator Playset , which had many kids in the early 90s trying to recreate the madness of James Cameron's first two flicks. Essentially, kids used the non-toxic flesh powder enclosed to Mold and Destroy your own Terminator! Naturally, the toy had some issues and surviving sets may not exactly work great today, but the toy was created in 2030 (according to the box), so how well would you perform at -15 years of age?

WIND-UP TIN ROBOT

(China, 2011)

Surely this is a wind up? Geddit? Wind Up? No OK moving swiftly on, this imaginatively named oddity of a tin toy (the box just says Robot) is clearly inspired by a T-800. Despite having massive hands (since when did Skynet build goalkeepers?) and a troubled facial expression that makes it look like it has just left an hour-long conversation with Katie Hopkins, this wind-up toy is not all bad. The design is pretty faithful and there are far worse licensed and non-licensed items out there than this odd retro-looking tin toy.

RETRO ENDOGLOW TERMINATOR

(Neco, 2015)

Ahead of its appearance at San Diego Comic-Con this year, this new figure pays tribute to Kenner s vintage Endoglow *Terminator* 2 toy (1991), which has a decidedly nostalgic place in many people s hearts but Neco s modernised and articulated figure is the bot's nuts! Neco's figure is a brilliantly modern toy, wrapped in affectionate love for the original and coming in classic packaging to boot but it's infinitely better designed. Even John Connor couldn t turn down this green glowing glug of gorgeousness.

TERMINATOR FLYING FIST

(Playmates, 2009)

The fake fist toy is hardly a new innovation, with many big hand style toys encouraging kids to clobber one another senseless for decades. However, Playmates *Terminator Salvation* flying fist toy is a bit of an odd one, as Terminator is not exactly the first franchise that comes to mind when thinking of a product like this. Plus we can t be the only ones who see that box art and think of *Jingle All the Way* s Dementor character (Ta-ta Turbo Man). See, we got through this one without a single inappropriate fisting joke… dammit!

BRONZE TERMINATOR THEME SKULL BELT BUCKLE

(OGRM, 2014)

Bronze is often considered the third place reward but in this case, we ll make an exception. There is no better way to keep your trousers in check than with this brilliantly crafted belt buckle that just screams class.

TERMINATOR 2 POCKET MOVIE VIEWER

(Action Ready, 1991)

The action movie in your pocket . Perhaps that box quote is a little aggrandising but this vintage movie viewer added to the merchandising madness surrounding James Cameron s *Terminator 2: Judgment Day*, which of all the films has probably produced some of the most far-reaching gear (from Micro Machines to Paint-by-Numbers sets). Essentially a collection of film images, this nifty little item is quite collectable. Isn t it incredible by today s standards that an R-Rated Action Film was so widely used to flog kids products? It s like having *Dredd* or *Mad Max: Fury Road* promote Coco Pops... actually, that s an awesome idea come to think of it. Oh and not to dwell on this, but how could any parent back then wave around age ratings when this movie viewer' is aged 4+ and the film is Rated R (or 15 for us Brits)?

TERMINATOR 3 CIGARS AND HUMIDORS

(Daniel Marshall, 2001)

Daniel Marshall is a big name in this world of fine boxes and cigar chomping and is Arnold Schwarzenegger s main supplier for cigars. So naturally, this smokin hot and very rare set of decorated cigars in a humidor (with a lid decorated by an image of Arnie in action) is a great, if very rare, find. The cast and crew of *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines* were apparently given them as a gift, so there are likely a few out there if they haven t been snapped up by collectors already. If you do a quick Internet search, there are some fans in ownership of these very rare sets.

BE@RBRICK TERMINATOR

(Be@rbrick, 2009)

You d be seeking Salvation if this ungodly toy found its way into your home! Whoever said Teddy Bears are always cute clearly has never seen this (or sat through *Toy Story 3* - Lotso Huggin Bear, what a bastard!). The Be@rbrick brand prides itself on diversity with its bear models taking influence from artistic styles, television, movies and celebrities. Along the way, the series has made cute bear characters out of Darth Vader, Iron Man and many others but this release, which was in occasion of *Terminator Salvation*, is more scary than hairy. With red eyes and an evil smile, this licensed toy looks like it wants to take over your home by force although perhaps that s the point. Talk about bricking it.

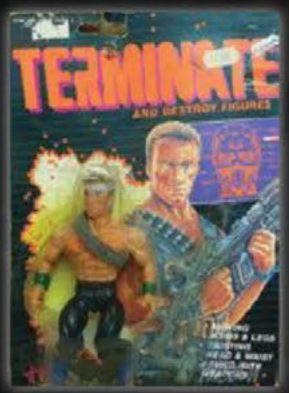
TERMINATOR 3 MOTORCYCLE

(Indian Motorcycles, 2003)

Say what you like about *Terminator 3: Rise of the Machines*, but had the film not existed, Indian Motorcycles would not have created this beautiful bike that is enough to send your retinal scanners wild. Imprinted with the T3 Logo and with a fiery paint job, this motorcycle is a fantastic creation and the most expensive item on our list (shocker) with one auction going well north of $700,000. Despite being of very limited origin, there are a few still knocking about. In the words of Robert Patrick s T-1000, *"Say... that's a nice bike..."*

TERMINATE AND DESTROY FIGURE

(unknown, 1993)



Less a Terminator figure than a poor man s action man, this bootleg toy is clearly taking a page out of the series book (as evident by the schematics of an exoskeleton on the box) but the character looks more like a Jean-Claude Van Damme-type character from an unmade Predator movie (ironic, as he was originally set to star in that particular film), who would likely have got shot to shit by the Yautja. Still, far be it for us to have a dig at a figure that boasts Moving arms and legs .

ICE SCRAPER

(Carolco, 1991)

"Let's kick some ice", oh wait a sec, sorry, wrong Arnie film. This *Terminator 2* licensed (and actually quite good looking as ice scrapers go) ice scraper, some may say, is scraping the barrel. However, picture this: a post-war future where Skynet rules the earth and there is a nasty ground frost bad isn t it? Now picture a post-war future where Skynet rules the earth and there is a nasty ground frost and this ice scraper! See, it s not all bad now, eh? We can t wait to see what a Skynet grit wagon will look like!

LIGHTER

(Zippo, 2003)

This very stylish lighter is inspired by *Terminator 2*, but features an image familiar to many fans of the series - a character arriving in the present from the future. This lighter is a rather rare commodity among collectors and would go perfect with that cigar collection!

JUMBO FIGURE THE TERMINATOR ROBOT ENDOSKELETON MODEL KIT

(Tsukuda, 1985)

Alongside Tsukuda s assembly required *The Terminator* figure was this early example of a Terminator Exoskeleton 1/6 Scale Toy. Figures from the likes of Movie Maniacs, Neca and Hot Toys have undoubtedly boasted far greater models in the years that have followed but for many a fan, Tsukuda s early Terminator Exoskeleton will hold fond childhood memories in its metallic hands.

GNOMINATOR

(Big Mouth, 2010)

Big Mouth have a long line of novelty gnomes, most being rather rude, though there are less bums and more guns with this Terminator-inspired gnome. Can t say we d want this little buffed-up, weapon carrying, resin assassin sat scaring the pond life but that being said they could just push him off the wall top. And that, kids, is why Skynet uses Hyperalloy!

PROMOTIONAL VHS SUNGLASSES

(Thorn EMI, 1985)

A nostalgic item among collectors, although if you are looking purely for fashion purposes, Gargoyle's official *Terminator* eye wear is the better option. Still, there is much to be said for these sunglasses which came alongside the VHS release of *The Terminator* in 1985 and give you that thumbs up look. *"You could look fi-e-ine"*!

BOOTLEG TERMINATOR

(Chap Mei, 1992)

On many levels this toy is ah forget it, it makes no sense whatsoever! Representing the eccentricity that makes Bootleg toys both crap and irresistible, this bronze coloured T-800 figure looks like the product of some kind of threesome between Dot Matrix, C-3PO and a T-800. The figure is missing the lower half of its left arm (well, it can t get any stranger anyway) and bafflingly has a lightening symbol and the letters S.P. on its chest (what they mean remains a mystery, presumably *"sorry peeps"*, as any kid that received this over a proper Terminator toy would feel slightly dispirited). Still, at least you can play with it, well kinda, in spite of the fact that it has about as much movement as a Carbonite-bound arthritic aunt. Oh well - give em a hand for trying!

25TH ANNIVERSARY T-800 REPLICA LEATHER JACKET

(Windlass Studios, 2009)

It s less I ll be back, and more on my back with this neat XXL Sized (he s a big fella our Arnold) Leather Jacket, that was Windlass Studio s way of celebrating 25 glorious years of termination (or more than that if you consider the time jumping). Still, we are not sure it would be able to withstand the same wear and tear it does on screen, although if you want to go out and crash lorries or get into gun fights to test it actually don t do that, leave the unbridled train wrecks to the professionals like Arnie, Sly and Adam Sandler.

METALLIC CYBORG MAKE-UP KIT

(FX Illusions, 1991)

Sure it s dated, but even by modern standards this toy set is one hell of an idea that encourages kids to unleash their inner make-up maestro! Included in the set is half a Terminator skull (with flashing eye) to graft to your face and using the enclosed make-up materials, you can make it look like your living tissue exterior has been blown away to reveal this metal skull. Take our money! Although please beware that extracting your eye should still be left to trained medical staff or Stan Winston!

OUTSIDE THE BOX

ALL THE NEWS FROM THE WORLDS OF DOCTOR WHO WITH PAUL MOUNT

WHO s At Comic-Con

BBC Worldwide and BBC America have announced that **Doctor Who** returns to San Diego Comic-Con for a panel in Hall H on Thursday, July 9th. Twelfth Doctor Peter Capaldi will make his first ever appearance at Comic-Con with co-stars Jenna Coleman (Clara Oswald) and Michelle Gomez (Missy), lead writer and executive producer Steven Moffat and executive producer Brian Minchin. Capaldi's first season delivered BBC America its highest-rated season ever and is available now on all digital platforms in the US.

Peter Capaldi appears to be cautiously looking forward to his first Comic-Con appearance: *Tales of San Diego Comic-Con are told in awe on every set around the known fantasy/sci-fi production world. It s become a fabled kingdom, one I am thrilled to find myself heading for. And to appear in the legendary Hall H is a further twist to the cosplay and comic madness I may never recover from.*

Obituary: Nigel Terry 1945 – 2015

Actor Nigel Terry, who played General Cobb in the 2007 episode *The Doctor s Daughter* (alongside David Tennant, Catherine Tate, Freema Agyeman and guest star Georgia Moffatt, the future Mrs Tennant) died at the end of April after contracting emphysema. Beyond his extensive credits working for the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company, Nigel first came to prominence as King Arthur in John Boorman's 1981 feature film **Excalibur**. On TV, he appeared in guest roles in series such as **Spooks**, **Foyle's War**, **Marple**, **Highlander**, and **Sherlock Holmes**.

Series Nine News

With the debut of Series Nine potentially only two months away (if the heavily-rumoured August Bank Holiday commencement date is to be believed) cast and crew are now working flat-out on the final blocks for the upcoming series. In casting news – and much to no-one's surprise despite promises otherwise – Ingrid Oliver is returning to the series, reprising her role as UNIT's Doctor-obsessed scientist Osgood. Fans will remember how she was apparently killed off (disintegrated by Missy/The Master) in the *Death in Heaven* finale of Series Eight and despite assurances from showrunner Moffat that the character really was dead, she joins Jemma Redgrave's returning Kate Stewart for episodes seven and eight, written by Peter Harness (who wrote last year's controversial *Kill the Moon* and the recent BBC adaptation of **Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell**) and directed by Daniel Nettheim, whose previous credits include acclaimed BBC corrupt-cop thriller **Line of Duty**. "*Osgood is back, fresh from her murder at the end of last series*," said Moffat. "*We recently confirmed that Osgood was definitely dead and not returning, but in a show about time travel anything can happen. This time, though, can the Doctor trust his number one fan?* Fans preferring some narrative integrity might be able to take solace from the fact that the Doctor's old shape-shifting adversaries the Zygons (last seen in 2013's fiftieth anniversary episode *Day of the Doctor*, in which the aliens took on the form of both Osgood and Stewart) also appear in the episodes, which suggests that perhaps all might not be as it seems...

Meanwhile, director Justin Molotnikov has been revealed as helming one of the remaining two-parters, the story format that appears to make up the entire run of the ninth series; although it is not confirmed whether this will be Mark Gatiss' rumoured story or the traditional Moffat finale. Molotnikov's previous TV credits include episodes of BBC One's popular **Merlin** and the Starz fantasy drama **Da Vinci's Demons**.

More Moffat for Series Ten?

Whilst nothing is yet announced regarding a tenth series of **Doctor Who** – Series Nine is still deep in production – recent reports seem to suggest that current showrunner Steven Moffat is likely to be in charge of the series for its tenth new series since its 2005 resurrection, Moffat's fifth in the show's creative driving seat. Speaking at an event at the Institute of Technology's Auditorium in New York's Broadway on May 14th to celebrate ten years of the new series in conjunction with BAFTA Cymru, BBC America and the Cardiff Business Council, Moffat appeared to tell event host Jaci Stephen that he had "*just signed up for another year of **Doctor Who***." So that's all good then...

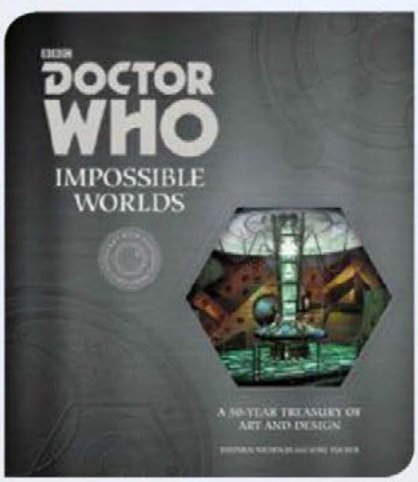
Book News

Just released in hardback from BBC Books is the large format *The Scientific Secrets of **Doctor Who*** by Simon Guerrier and Dr Marek Kukula. The book asks how much of **Doctor Who**'s science is real and how much is fiction and, weaving together authoritative scientific discussion with a series of new adventures by acclaimed *Doctor Who* writers including Jenny T. Colgan, George Mann and Jacqueline Rayner, Guerrier and Dr Kukula explore the possibilities of time travel, life on other planets, artificial intelligence, parallel universes and more. From the dawn of astronomy and the discovery of gravity to the moon landings and string theory, the authors show how science has inspired **Doctor Who**, and how, on occasion, life has mirrored art, such as the 1989 discovery of 'ice-canoes' on Triton which were featured in the 1973 serial *Planet of the Daleks*.

October sees the release from Harper Design of ***Doctor Who**: Impossible Worlds A Fifty-Year Treasury of Art and Design* by Steven Nicholas and Mike Tucker (former BBC special effects technician now providing model work for the series through his own company The Model Unit), described as "*an intimate, behind-the-curtains tour of the sets, costumes, spacecraft, alien planets, creatures, weapons and gadgets used to create the stunning world of **Doctor Who***. ***Doctor Who**: Impossible Worlds* explores how the art department works together with costumers and make-up and special effects artists to produce a coherent look for a diverse range of alien worlds, reveals how the artists' relationship with the computer graphics department allows them to create locations far grander than possible in the real world, and shows how today's creative artists have built upon the designs produced by their predecessors - the pioneers of the program's 'classic' era, whose legacy has delighted audiences since 1963.

Divided thematically, ***Doctor Who**: Impossible Worlds* examines the history of the program and its art and set design, and highlights how various re-occurring designs have evolved over time. The book promises to be "*chock full of surprising, illuminating, and fascinating information, photographs, and trivia.*

Fans of biographies of former **Doctor Who** notables will be fascinated by a forthcoming book from Fantom Publishing chronicling the life and career of ferociously private actor Anthony Ainley, who portrayed the Master between 1981 and 1989. The book, due for release later this year, is written by Karen Louise Hollis who says, "*This is the first time all aspects of his life have been drawn together. I have had the pleasure of interviewing a number of friends and colleagues from every aspect of Anthony s life and examined the archives to bring together the most complete and fascinating story.*



WATCHING DOCTOR WHO

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK AT THE WHONIVERSE BY JR SOUTHALL

There's a lovely scene near the start of *The Tomb of the Cybermen* that shows off Patrick Troughton's Second Doctor at his absolute best. Victoria Waterfield has just joined the TARDIS crew after an adventure in which the Daleks have made her an orphan, and the Doctor is reassuring her that although her life will go on without her father, her memory of him "*won t always be a sad one.*" It's delightfully played by both Troughton and Deborah Watling (as Waterfield), and is oft quoted by fans as the moment at which Troughton's portrayal of the Doctor really comes into its own. It's a fairly atypical moment in a series which generally concentrates on the scares and the thrills, though, and it is preceded by another short exchange which is invoked far less frequently but which is probably far more telling.

The real turning point in the *Doctor Who* of the late 1960s comes when Victoria turns up on an alien planet for her first adventure post-*The Evil of the Daleks*, wearing a miniskirt. The Doctor tells her she looks lovely in it, to which she replies, "*Don t you think it s a bit...?*

"*A bit short? Oh, I shouldn t worry about that. Look at Jamie s.*

It's a pivotal moment – and it's the Patrick Troughton era in a nutshell. Had Victoria Waterfield been a real Victorian lady, she would never have dreamed of replacing her floor-length dress for an above-the-knee skirt. But the people making *Doctor Who* had other ideas, and their vision for the series didn't include the character that they themselves had created remaining true to the mindset of the period in which they'd placed her; it was more important that she should reflect the fashions of the time the series was made, than those from which Waterfield had been taken.

There's a similar thing going on with Jamie McCrimmon, the male companion who is with the Second Doctor for all but the first of his stories. Originally conceived as a one-off character for a story set in 1746, Frazer Hines' portrayal of the Scottish Highlander proved popular enough with the production team that they wasted no time in securing his services as a regular. And while Jamie doesn't have a "miniskirt moment", it isn't long before his 18th Century roots are all but forgotten once he's joined the Doctor in adventuring around the universe. McCrimmon's thick Scottish accent isn't the only thing that gets watered down in order to make Jamie an enjoyable and engaging character for the viewers at home.

At the other end of the scale, and the other end of the Second Doctor's tenure, we get Zoe Heriot, the astrophysicist with the photographic memory from *The Wheel in Space*. In her debut story, Heriot is a coldly logical librarian with a penchant for maths, and while this theme will be returned to in subsequent stories when appropriate – and often for comedic effect – in reality the combination of Zoe with the Second Doctor

and Jamie produces the 1969 dream team; the youthful and avuncular older man with his two young and attractive sidekicks, swinging through the late 1960s like an outer space version of The Beatles' *A Hard Day s Night*. They're entrancing to watch (livening up even the dullest of stories with their chemistry and repartee), but there is very little attempt at plausibility in the way they are characterised.

The Tenth Planet was a huge turning point for *Doctor Who*, and not only for its introduction of the concept of regeneration. In spite of being written upon the advice of a scientist (with little to no apparent regard for the credibility of the plot), what the First Doctor's final story really does is signal the end of the series' original conceit of being educational, in favour of embracing its capacity for entertainment. From this point forwards, *Doctor Who* is all about the "Yeti on the loo in Tooting Bec", and the historically-set episodes disappear just two stories after the Second Doctor makes his bow. There might have been external reasons for the disappearance from our screens of the Daleks in 1967, but the silver jump-suited Cybermen are a much more modish (and "mod"ish) replacement – and *The Tomb of the Cybermen* is the perfect evocation of the TARDIS team adventuring for adventure's sake, including as it does a sequence wherein the Doctor is proactive in initiating the danger at the beginning of the story. By the time the rather gloomy Victoria is replaced by the much livelier Zoe, the metamorphosis is complete; *Doctor Who* in 1969 is fun for kids of all ages – and very little more. It is because it is so *much* fun that it is so well-regarded now.

It is also representative of an odd dichotomy that has dogged *Doctor Who* ever since. As fans, we like to think of the series as educational (although resolutely *not* a children's show!), stimulating and intelligent – and sometimes it is those things. But not always. And the truth is, secretly many of us prefer it when

it's being a little less Reithian – when it's concentrating less on being the moral guardian of our childhoods. We see this at its most apparent during the following decade, the 1970s, when the slightly patronising Third Doctor era – stuffed full of lectures on everything from ecological issues to Buddhism and contemporary politics – was followed by the arrival of Philip Hinchcliffe and his second-in-command Robert Holmes. Seasons 13 and 14 are so far removed from the values the series was induced with in 1963, it's like watching another programme entirely; rather than educating the kids, Hinchcliffe and Holmes cared about only one thing: scaring the hell out of them, and there wasn't a pastiche too far for the pair when doing so!

There's a similar thing going on with the modern series, in that although Russell T Davies' interpretation was undoubtedly the perfect recipe for returning the series to pride of place in the scheduling, Steven Moffat has stripped the show of some of the stodginess that dogged his predecessor and – in spite of the raised voices you *always* get complaining about whomever's in charge, and have done since fandom first raised its hands in horror forty years ago – by and large the series seems even more loved than ever.

And it all stems from the Second Doctor's time in the TARDIS, when *Doctor Who* threw off its shackles and got down to the business of being *fun* – and some of it *is* pretty silly, let's make no mistake about that. There's no Earthly reason why the Cybermen should mess around with the sugar supply prior to their attempted invasion of *The Moonbase*, and yet the revelation of what their plan entails still sends the hairs up on the back of your neck, and makes for enthralling television. Even the more revered stories include their share of absurdity; the moment two-thirds of the way through *The Web of Fear* when the villain of the piece shows up just to let everybody *know* he's the villain of the piece, before disappearing again for another 25 minutes (enough time for the Second Doctor to fashion a plan) ranks as one of *Doctor Who*'s stupidest moments, but it happens in one of the most highly thought-of stories and nobody much notices how incongruous it is, let alone minds.

Even *The Tomb of the Cybermen* is constructed around a most un-Cyberman-like illogicality; it's never adequately explained why the species would ever need to bury themselves in the first place, let alone in a mausoleum that they can't then unlock from the inside. Lip service is paid to the preposterousness of the problem for sure, but the real reason is, of course, because the writers thought it would be amusing.

Doctor Who doesn't really need to make perfect sense, not in a tick-box kind of a way, in order to be "good" *Doctor Who* (in fact, the two things are often mutually exclusive), just as long as we can tell who the good guys are and the bad guys are suitably villainous. As long as the stories are told with a verve and a vividness that carry us along for the ride, we are generally happy to go with it – and the period from *The Power of the Daleks* to *The War Games* is unusually ripe with brio and audacity. Let's hope it's not too long before some more of it is returned for us to enjoy.

ARTWORK BY SIMON BRETT

RISE OF THE AUTONS

Where better to turn when considering mechanical autonomy gone wrong than, well, the Autons? Bursting through a shop window - in colour, too - serving as the first of many Earth-bound threats for Jon Pertwee's Third Doctor, now exiled to our little planet as punishment for repeated breaches of the strict non-intervention policies of the Time Lords. After a tumble from the TARDIS in remote woodland and a stay in hospital, it's time to get reacquainted with UNIT, whose beginnings he had been a part of during his previous incarnation in the likes of *The Web of Fear* and *The Invasion*.

We know now, of course, that the *real* enemy was BBC budget cuts! Hence the decision to run with more Earth-based adventures, and the Doctor getting a proper job of sorts as scientific advisor to the organisation now led by Brigadier Lethbridge-Stewart, whom the velvet-shirted Time Lord had first become acquainted with as a Colonel.

By way of assistance, he also gained Cambridge-educated boffin Liz Shaw - their first assignment being to investigate a spate of strange meteorites. Of course, these are no ordinary lumps of space-rock...

The Nestene Consciousness has arrived. And it will soon begin an invasion by means of animating plastic, the resulting shop-dummy servants dubbed the Autons and presumably causing generations of viewers to quake in fear every time they enter most High Street clothing stores.

With good reason, going by their iconic activation scene; smashing through a shop front window, making light work of dispatching a local bobby and several members of the general public!

It would seem that the Consciousness was remarkably quick to manufacture its plastic servants thanks to the strategic possession of the managing director of Auto Plastics, a unique approach to doing business.

HIBBERT: It s er, it s the new policy. We ve, er, got a new policy.
RANSOME: What s happened to this place? Most of the staff gone, security notices everywhere.
HIBBERT: We re developing a new process. It s all very secret. We ve, er, changed everything.
RANSOME: I ll say you have. The whole layout of the factory floor is different. And my workshop, what s in there now?
HIBBERT: Stay away from there, John.
RANSOME: But what about my equipment?
HIBBERT: We ll, we ll send it to you.
RANSOME: Just like that?
HIBBERT: I don t think you should have come here, John. You must go away at once. It s not safe.
RANSOME: What s the matter? You keeping saying we . We ve got a new policy. Well, who is we ?

Meanwhile, the only Time Lord on the UNIT staff and his new companion work out what's going on with the odd globe-like shapes found with the earlier meteor shower.

BRIGADIER: Doctor, you were saying that this is some kind of brain.
DOCTOR: Yeah, or part of a brain. An intelligence. Yes, that s probably nearer the mark.
BRIGADIER: Sending signals somewhere. Where to?
DOCTOR: Well, the rest of itself, surely?
LIZ: The other globes that came down?
DOCTOR: Mmm..hmm.
LIZ: They re all part of one entity. Let s say a collective intelligence.
BRIGADIER: Can it see us?
DOCTOR: My dear fellow, it s not sentient.
LIZ: No, our measurements prove there s no physical substance inside it.
BRIGADIER: But, if it is has no physical form
DOCTOR: No, once here it can presumably create a suitable shell for itself. Otherwise there d be no point in coming.
LIZ: The plastics factory.
DOCTOR: Yes.

Among those watching all this unfold must have been one Russell T Davies, the man who restored *Doctor Who* to its rightful place at the heart of Saturday teatime viewing back in 2005. Having gained the support of the BBC to develop a new series, and opting to start from scratch with Christopher Eccleston (his leading man in ITV's *The Second Coming*) as the Ninth Doctor, he would, in a sense, follow in *Spearhead*'s footsteps by pitting the man who strides through the universe wearing a dark leather jacket saying *Don t touch me*" against the malevolent mannequins once more for a whole new potential audience's viewing pleasure.

Onwards, then, to *Rose*. Notable for being the first episode in which events unfold from the companion's perspective, this new and indeed ground-breakingly Northern-accented incarnation quickly finds himself in what turns out to be so much more than a mere price war.

The girl who will become the Gallifreyan with a hint of Manchester's travel buddy finds more than she bargained for after hours in her dead-end retail job. "*Nice to meet you, Rose. Run for your life!*

ROSE: You pulled his arm off.
DOCTOR: Yep. Plastic.
ROSE: Very clever. Nice trick! Who were they then, students? Is this a student thing or what?
DOCTOR: Why would they be students?
ROSE: I don t know.
DOCTOR: Well, you said it. Why students?
ROSE: Cos to get that many people dressed up and being silly, they got to be students.
DOCTOR: That makes sense. Well done.
ROSE: Thanks.
DOCTOR: They re not students.

This is most definitely not the work of card-carrying members of the NUS. Any parents watching with their children on the evening of March 26th would most likely have recognised what the Doctor terms "*Living plastic creatures. They re being controlled by a relay device in the roof, which would be a great big problem if I didn t have this. So, I m going to go up there and blow them up, and I might well die in the process, but don t worry about me. No, you go home. Go on. Go and have your lovely beans on toast. Don t tell anyone about this, because if you do, you ll get them killed*".

That's that, then. He is at least kind enough to explain the *modus operandi* of the Autons to Rose and younger viewers alike. Something to ponder as they "*eat chips, go to bed, and watch telly*". Is there any better way to spend a Saturday night, though, really? Anyway, back to what these Autons do. "*It s not a price war. They want to overthrow the human race and destroy you*". Just as they'd tried to in *Spearhead*!

And from their masters' point of view- "*You ve got such a good planet. Lots of smoke and oil, plenty of toxins and dioxins in the air, perfect. Just what the Nestene Consciousness needs. Its food stock was destroyed in the war, all its protein plants rotted, so Earth, dinner!*

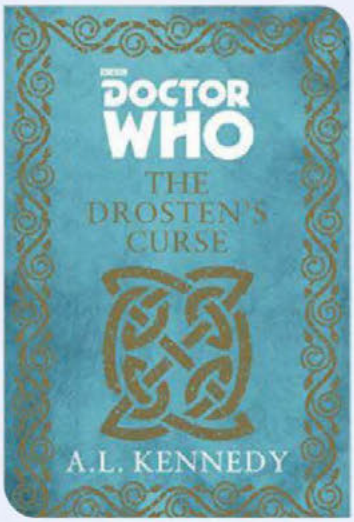
The 'war' is, of course, later revealed as the Last Great Time War, its impact clearly leaving a scar in the psyche of this newest of the Doctors, the last of the Time Lords. "*I should know, I was there. I fought in the war. It wasn t my fault. I couldn t save your world! I couldn t save any of them!*

But while war was hell – "*Nestene Consciousness? Easy.*

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

REVIEWS

NEW WHO RELEASES REVIEWED AND RATED



THE DROSTEN'S CURSE

AUTHOR: A. L. KENNEDY
PUBLISHER: BBC BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: JULY 16TH

Cubicle 7's Doctor Who Adventures in Time and Space Roleplaying Game concentrates on the current TV series. For the last few years, BBC Books has been attracting well-known writers (Michael Moorcock, Stephen Baxter, et al.) to write 'proper' Doctor Who books. But it is with this latest outing, courtesy of A. L. Kennedy, that the range has really reached its peak.

Featuring a companionless Fourth Doctor, the tale takes place in the Scottish town of Arbroath. Beneath the everyday banality of a golf course, something is discovered that may mean the end of the world. But then, if you've read the Time Trips novella The Death Pit, you already knew that; the novel is a greatly expanded adaptation of it.

Kennedy's delightful way of writing the world around the characters means that there is something that will make you laugh at least once in every short chapter. She has a way of stating the absurd in a way that makes it sound quite whimsical, really (for example, a character is taken aback at having woken up with "only the usual number of limbs that day").

This talent for winning descriptions owes a lot to famous teller of Target tales Terrance Dicks, but this is one case of the student far outclassing the master; where Dicks' prose was workmanlike with touches of genius, (this is not as much of a criticism as it may appear; Dicks has his admirers for a reason) here the genius is practically in every sentence. You've got to love lines like "the Doctor paced up to the Spa Welcome Desk like a jolly tiger in a maroon jacket" or "a both angry and stealthy mammoth was creeping up behind them to tread on precious and fragile things - things like their heads".

But those are a few quotes. To really appreciate the beauty of the book as a whole, you really have to read it. With just one contribution, Kennedy has rapidly risen up to become one of our favourite Doctor Who authors of the modern range. Hopefully there's more where that came from.

SCOTT VARNHAM

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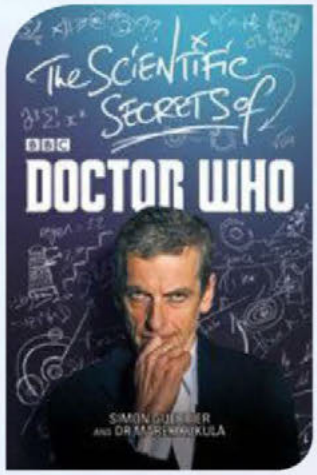

THE SCIENTIFIC SECRETS OF DOCTOR WHO

AUTHOR: SIMON GUERRIER & DR. MAREK KUKUL
PUBLISHER: BBC BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Doctor Who and science have had a very on-and-off relationship, with uncountable moments of plausibility being erased from existence in favour of dramatic licence. But back in 1963, the show began with a very educational remit – to balance historical stories with future-set stories, so that children and their parents would learn about different historical eras and scientific ideas, while being entertained by the adventures of the Doctor and his companions – and it's that ideal of educational entertainment that Simon Guerrier and Dr. Marek Kukula are returning the franchise to.

The Scientific Secrets of Doctor Who is a sizeable book divided into three sections – 'Space', 'Time', and 'Humanity' – each further divided into five chapters. Each chapter begins with a short Doctor Who story, followed by an explanation of a related scientific concept, drawing links to the Doctor's adventures past and present in order to assist their explanations.

This is a difficult kind of book to get right – too wordy and you become inaccessible, too simplified and you become patronising. And yet Guerrier and Kukula hit the perfect balance, clearly and dynamically covering a wide range of subjects. It's perfectly pitched for Who fans who are intrigued to know more about concepts touched on by the show, and though some scientific-minded readers may find themselves familiar with much of the ground covered, there's something new for everyone.

Importantly, it's evident the writers really know both their science and their Doctor Who; the quotes and references chosen genuinely do support the science and rarely feel crowbarred in. You'll learn how we can potentially travel in time, just how plausible Omega's anti-matter universe is, and all about creatures with regenerative abilities similar to a Time Lord's.

The short stories, by authors Whovians will know from the novel and audio series, are also of a high quality. Every Doctor gets at least one story (though the Twelfth appears more often than others) and each story deals with the following chapter's scientific concept without preaching the educational point. Inevitably, some don't work as well as others – with a couple feeling constrained by their word counts – but they're more than made up for by the better tales. A particular highlight is Andrew Smith's The Constant Doctor, a Fifth Doctor tale with an unexpected regeneration-based twist and some good-hearted jokes at the expense of 1970s special effects.

Whether you've been a Whovian for decades or Mr. Capaldi's your first Doctor, if you've ever watched an episode of Doctor Who and wondered "could that really happen?", Guerrier and Kukula probably answer your question – and a whole lot more you never thought of asking. Educational but not inaccessible, entertaining but not patronising – The Scientific Secrets of Doctor Who is a book the producers back in 1963 would love.

KIERON MOORE

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LIVVY BOOTE IS...

THE GIRL FROM PLANET X

As I write this, the word on everyone s mouth is still *Avengers: Age of Ultron*. At least, the internet is still raving about it, and with good reason, too - for many of us, it s the action packed, witty-one-liner-filled movie we ve been waiting for.

Marvel Studios has done particularly well in providing awesome, diverse female characters - like *Daredevil* s Claire and Karen, or the wonderful agent Peggy Carter. This, of course, is great news for the progression of gender equality in film and television. And there s more on the way, with Captain Marvel scheduled for 2018, leaving fans excitedly bouncing on the edge of their seats. So, DC may have given us the legendary Wonder Woman and the New 52 s Batwoman, but Marvel s done pretty well too.

And who better to direct the Avengers movies - starring one of Marvel s best female characters, Black Widow - than Joss Whedon, the creator of feminist icon Buffy Summers? *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was revolutionary, with its kick-ass girls and portrayal of lesbian relationships in a way that wasn t, for once, hyper-sexualised and aimed at male audiences. Its well developed, multi-faceted women remain today great examples of what a strong female character really is. And Whedon s *Firefly* was no less progressive in its representation of women, bringing us Kaylee, Zo , River, and my personal favourite, Inara.

However, there are people on the Internet who have pointed out that Whedon may have dropped the ball.

I came home after watching *Avengers: Age of Ultron* feeling happy with the result. It was exactly what I d expected. I would ve liked to have been surprised a little more, seen something a little different - but, I was all round quite content. So, arguably, the last thing I should have done was to go onto Tumblr. Because, whilst often being a very informative site, it is also a very, *very* angry one. It really knows how to take a show or a movie that you love and then point out everything that s wrong with it, to the extent that you feel guilty for even watching it.

I knew that when I logged on I would see people nit-picking *Age of Ultron,* and yes, it can be tiring, sifting through the diatribes when all I m looking for is a picture of a cat dressed up as Thor. That being said, the good thing about Tumblr is that it doesn t allow you to be a complacent viewer; just because you re a fan, doesn t mean you shouldn t also be critical.

Having read what some fans were saying, I found myself realising that there were elements of the film which had been disappointing, but I hadn t really recognised them at the time. The main one being Black Widow s (Natasha Romanoff) characterisation.

Scarlett Johansson is a fantastic actress. She brings Black Widow s character to life, providing a sense of authority and power that s difficult to do when you re the only girl in the team; in other words, she doesn t let Black Widow get drowned out by the testosterone. And in interviews, she s more than happy to challenge the people who ask about her diet and ignore the fact that she s a talented actress. She s an all-round cool person, to be honest.

However, there are elements of Natasha s characterisation - the way she s been written, rather than performed - that have fired up many fans and caused the masses to turn against Whedon. Chiefly, her relationship with Bruce Banner, aka The Hulk. In the movie, Natasha acts as Bruce s babysitter whilst he s in Hulk mode,

Black Widow is one of Marvel Studio s best female characters, and Scarlett Johansson portrays her brilliantly - but have the writers done her justice?

Left: Kamala Khan, aka Ms Marvel. *Right:* Carol Danvers, aka Captain Marvel.
Some of comic books greatest, most diverse female characters have come from Marvel.

bringing him down with a lullaby ; the trusting relationship which forms between them develops into something more romantic. Natasha shares the secrets of her past and the two discuss running away together for a more peaceful life. After years of working as a spy, it seems that Black Widow wants to hang up her weapons, call it a day, and settle down.

When it comes to female lead characters and romantic plotlines, I m always a little torn. On the one hand, women in television and film shouldn t always have to have a romantic subplot, as they seem to a lot of the time. It s frustrating when you find an interesting female character, but then her character is suddenly undermined by the introduction of a romantic interest which overshadows her entire role. But then, on the other hand, a strong female character is a woman who is multi-faceted, well developed, realistic - and women, realistically, are often (though not always) interested in pursuing a romantic relationship. So what s wrong with portraying women who want one? In my opinion, there s nothing wrong with it, so long as the writers of said character don t become lazy and forget that she has a personality outside of the relationship, as can often happen.

Now, that s not to say that Whedon did this with Black Widow; we ve seen in the past that she s a well-rounded character, and in *Age of Ultron* she did plenty of butt kicking, life saving, and general awesome Black Widow-y things. The problem I and other fans have with Natasha s pairing with Banner is the fact that for a woman who is focused on the job and thinks that love, in her own words, is for children , her relationship with Banner just comes out of nowhere. In other words, when it concerns female characters who are likely to pursue a relationship, there s nothing necessarily wrong with a bit of romance on the side; however, to me, and plenty of other people, Natasha was one of those women - of whom there are many in real life - who just was not interested in dropping everything for a guy.

Honestly, the pairing has left most in a state of bafflement, rather than excitement or anything else.

So, the movie caused quite a stir within the Marvel community - but it didn t stop there. Scarlett Johansson herself parodied Black Widow s romantic subplot in the hilarious Saturday Night Live sketch *Black Widow: Age of Me*. If you haven t seen it already, watch it. It s a rom-com style mock trailer, in which Black Widow, tottering around New York City in her broken high heels, falls for a handsome stranger, Ultron - *the story of a superhero and her super romance* . It summarises the out of the blue, out of character nature of the Natasha/Bruce relationship very well, whilst highlighting Black Widow s sad lack of stand-alone film. The fact that Scarlett herself volunteered to point this out certainly says something about what Black Widow is getting out of Marvel Studios, and what she *should* be getting.

Having said all of that, for those of you who want to cheer on the couple of Avengers and their budding feelings for each other, go right on ahead, no one will get angry at you. It s all just a bit of fun in the end, anyway. Let s leave the shipping wars for Tumblr, where they belong, so we can avoid them and carry on with our lives like civilised human beings.

Since *Age of Ultron* s release, Whedon has stepped down from Marvel Studios. Regardless of whether he did *Age of Ultron* justice, it's definitely a good thing; movie franchises need new blood to be kept alive and interesting. The future still looks bright. Even so, Marvel s going to have to watch their backs - from out of the great shadow of *Avengers: Age of Ultron* s release DC will re-emerge with *Batman V Superman*, featuring (finally!) Wonder Woman. Plus, Supergirl has her own series coming out soon, for which I m particularly excited. Just from the trailer, it looks really promising:

What do you think is so bad about - girl ? I m a girl. And your boss. And powerful, rich, hot, and smart. So if you perceive Supergirl as anything less than excellent, then, isn t the real problem you?

It s safe to say that I m very excited.

There s a lot to look forward to, then, from the comic book universe, both Marvel and DC. Let s hope it ll all live up to the hype.

MARVEL'S BIGGEST SMALL HERO

By Andrew Pollard

Long-time comic book aficionados recognise ANT-MAN as a key player in the MARVEL world. A founding member of THE AVENGERS, the size-shifting hero has been right at the very core of some of Marvel's most momentous events since making his debut way back in 1962. After nearly a decade in development, finally this fan favourite hero is making his first steps into the MCU...

MARVEL

ANT-MAN PREVIEW

Small Steps to the Big Screen

Whilst July s Ant-Man has been in development for just shy of a decade now, the idea for a film focusing on the hero goes way back to the late 1980s. At that time, the legendary Stan Lee pitched an idea to Marvel Comics parent company, New World Entertainment, but this idea was shot down when it was revealed that Disney were working on a similar size-shifting project at that particular time. That film, of course, would go on to be Honey, I Shrunk the Kids. All would go quiet on an Ant-Man movie until the turn of the Millennium, with May 2000 seeing Artisan Entertainment announce a deal with Marvel to put together a Hank Pym-focused movie. Again though, all would soon go quiet. Then 2003 saw Edgar Wright and Joe Cornish submit a treatment to Artisan for Ant-Man, which was instead focused on the Scott Lang version of the chaacter. A year or so later, Wright and Cornish got to pitch their idea to Marvel Studios' Kevin Feige, who then officially hired the duo in April 2006. With Wright helming Ant-Man, the plan was for the film to be part of the first batch of Marvel s own movies, which would end up being known as the MCU's 'Phase One'.

Speaking at the 2006 San Diego Comic-Con, Edgar Wright revealed that there would be certain elements of humour in the movie and that it would now feature both Hank Pym and Scott Lang. As the years went on though, the film was on/off/on/off and naturally missed the boat when it came to Phase One of Marvel's films. It was then suggested by Wright in 2010 that the movie wouldn't actually be set within the constraints of the MCU and may be its own entity entirely, which obviously seemed a little bit of a silly move given what Marvel Studios and Disney had created by that point. When all was said and done, Edgar Wright would finally start serious work on Ant-Man in 2013, with the plan of having the movie be part of the MCU's Phase Three. When it came to casting, Paul Rudd eventually beat out competition from Joseph Gordon-Levitt for the film's lead role of Scott Lang. Michael Douglas was brought in as the original Ant-Man, Hank Pym, who would serve as a mentor of sorts to Rudd's Lang, and additional familiar faces such as Evangeline Lilly and Patrick Wilson were added to the cast. Whilst Wilson would end up having to depart the film due to other commitments, it also came to be that Edgar Wright and Marvel decided to part ways as well. Supposedly, the director s vision started to differentiate from what Marvel and Disney wanted for the film, and the two parties amicably split. With the likes of Adam McKay and Ruben Fleischer in the frame to replace Wright, it would end up being Yes Man's Peyton Reed who was tasked with the job of finally bringing Ant-Man to the big screen.

Big Arrival in the MCU

After such a tumultuous process to even get Ant-Man in front of the camera, what can we expect to see when the miniature hero hits the big screen in July? Well, the footage seen so far is certainly extremely positive, managing to have a sense of charm, menace and humour about it. One key element that has surprised many about Ant-Man is the titular hero himself, with Marvel Studios deciding to move forward with Scott Lang as their Ant-Man rather than Hank Pym. In the Marvel comic book realm, Hank Pym is one of the most complex and compelling characters, having founded The Avengers, suffered various breakdowns, created Ultron, infamously slapped Janet Van Dyne, and taken on more personalities than Vanessa Feltz has had hot dinners. Pym is a character who could undoubtedly be brought to life spectacularly on the big screen and developed over many, many movies. Instead though, the decision was made to have Hank Pym now merely a mentor-type who is looking to hand the Ant-Man mantle over to a worthy successor. Sensing good in petty thief Scott Lang, Pym sees him as someone

who has the heart and ability to do great things with his Ant-Man technology. Additionally, expect to see some backstory moments of a younger Hank Pym in his early days and creating his iconic suit. As for the Ant-Man technology itself, the main ability is that the suit can shrink in size whilst also increasing strength. Oh, and it also allows communication with ants. Obviously.

While Rudd's Scott Lang will be handed the secrets of the Ant-Man tech and tasked with using his newfound abilities for the greater good, on the other side of the coin is Corey Stoll's Darren Cross. A one-time protégé of Hank Pym's, Cross ends up taking over Pym Technologies and essentially makes a more military-heavy version of the Ant-Man suit. A sleeker upgrade on the standard suit that Scott Lang has, Cross becomes known as Yellowjacket and doesn't have the purest of intentions when it comes to using this newly-acquired tech. Again, comic book fans will be more than familiar with Yellowjacket, with the moniker being just one of the many that Hank Pym has gone by over the years. Interestingly enough, Pym went under the guise of Yellowjacket when he was arguably at his most unstable. As well as Ant-Man and Yellowjacket, Pym has also been known as Giant-Man, Goliath and even took on the moniker of The Wasp at one point. Ah, The Wasp, that's a nice segue to another character making her MCU debut in Peyton Reed's movie…

Assisting the cinematic Darren Cross in his acquisition of Pym Technologies will be Evangeline Lilly's Hope Van Dyne. The character will be the daughter of Hank Pym and Janet Van Dyne, and will have a mighty strained relationship with her father as indicated in her taking the Van Dyne name. As for Janet herself, she, of course, is the superhero known as The Wasp in comic book lore. Certain stories suggest that the character is dead in the MCU, but we wouldn t rule out an appearance from her during some of Pym's backstory. With a key part of Hope Van Dyne's Ant-Man arc being her struggling with having been brought up by two superheroes, expect her to take on the Wasp moniker herself at some point. Whether that's in this film or further down the line, we'll let you speculate on that.

Elsewhere in Ant-Man, we've got Judy Greer as Lang's estranged ex-wife, Maggie; Abby Ryder Fortson as Lang's daughter, Cassie; the always entertaining Bobby Cannavale as Paxton, a friend of Scott Lang's who ended up marrying Maggie; Michael Peña as Lang's one-time cellmate; and then small, supporting roles for the likes of David Dastmalchian, T.I., Martin Donovan, Gregg Turkington, and Jordi Mollà. Also keep an eye out for Hayley Atwell and John Slattery, who will reprise their roles of Peggy Carter and Howard Stark for some of the Hank Pym flashback moments, and of course, there's a Stan Lee cameo to look forward to.

Right now, Ant-Man is underway with its final promotional push, with Marvel and Disney treating the public to both microscopic and gigantic billboards across various locales. Whilst we know that Ant-Man will indeed shrink in the film, as evidenced beautifully in the recent trailers, it could very well also be that we get to see the suit increase in size. Maybe. But then again, maybe we're getting way ahead of ourselves. Still, with one eye looking forward, it's already been confirmed that Scott Lang will be a part of Captain America: Civil War's huge ensemble and chances are that the character will also be a key part of the two-part Avengers: Infinity War. Whilst many of us may still feel that utilising a younger Hank Pym in the MCU is a hugely missed opportunity, Paul Rudd is deeply charismatic, with a likeability and humility that lends itself well to the loveable rogue that is Scott Lang. Then when you take into consideration the impressive cast put together for Ant-Man, coupled with the brilliant footage that we've seen to date, all is shaping up for this small hero to make a big splash in the Marvel Cinematic Universe.

ANT-MAN is released on July 17th.

Ant-Men

Like most superheroes, Ant-Man is a moniker which has been taken on by several people over the years, so let us give you the big scoop on these miniature heroes.

Hank Pym Henry Pym, a brilliant scientist, was the first ever Ant-Man, making his comic book début back in 1962. The genius Pym created the famed Ant-Man suit after discovering the uber-powerful Pym Particles. With this new discovery allowing him to alter his size, Pym went about becoming his own superhero. Throwing in an ant-controlling helmet for good measure, Hank Pym became Ant-Man. After letting his then-girlfriend Janet Van Dyne in on things, Pym's other half would take on the mantle of Wasp and the duo would become founding members of Earth's Mightiest Heroes, The Avengers. Unfortunately for Hank Pym, like all good geniuses, he's also just a little unhinged and unstable at times, adding further to the complexity and intrigue that surrounded this fan favourite hero. To match his changing personality, Pym went on to take on various different guises, such as Yellowjacket, Goliath, Giant-Man, and even Wasp. His sanity was also further dented when he created his 'son'; a maniacal, genocidal being known as Ultron.

Scott Lang – Scott Lang is an almost Han Solo-esque figure in the Marvel world. He has done some bad things, is not an entirely good person, but he can still be relied on to do the right thing when it matters, and all with a roguish charm. Petty thief Lang first became Ant-Man after stealing Hank Pym's suit in order to save daughter Cassie from a life-threatening heart condition. See what we mean? Bad actions for good causes. Soon reforming his ways and steering clear of the law, Lang would end up taking on the Ant-Man mantle full-time after being given the nod by Pym whilst Hank dabbled with other aliases. Working alongside the Fantastic Four and then becoming a part of The Avengers, Lang certainly made his mark as Ant-Man. Well, until he was killed by Scarlet Witch during the crazy Avengers Disassembled arc. As ever with comic book characters, of course, he'd return from the grave a little while later.

Eric O'Grady Not content with having two characters take on the Ant-Man persona, Marvel decided to have S.H.I.E.L.D. agent Eric O'Grady take on the mantle as well. Whereas Scott Lang is comparable to Han Solo, O'Grady is best compared to Lando Calrissian if you scrap the part where Lando redeems himself in the third act of The Empire Strikes Back. O'Grady accidentally happened upon the Ant-Man outfit at S.H.I.E.L.D. HQ and stole the costume for his own means. And those means just happened to be impressing women, stealing valuable items, mocking those below him, and generally being a bit of a bastard. He would have a brief dabble as an Avenger before becoming a part of Marvel's Thunderbolts, a group of reformed villains. Finally making some sort of amends for his previous actions, Eric O'Grady would actually up dying a hero as he sacrificed his life to save a child during Secret Avengers.

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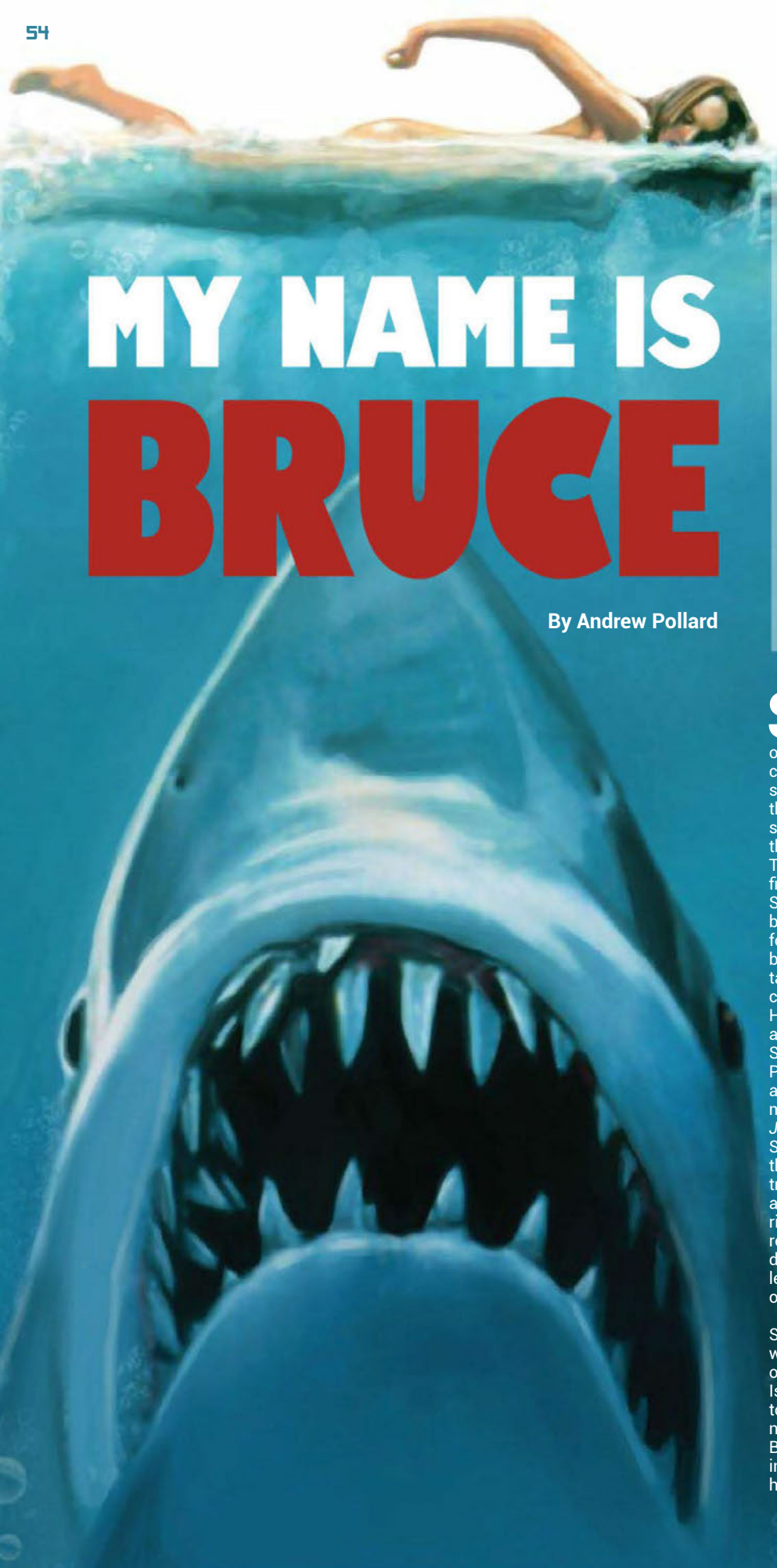


MY NAME IS BRUCE

By Andrew Pollard

Steven Spielberg's JAWS is without doubt one of the most iconic and influential movies in cinema history, so let's celebrate the 40th anniversary of the monster shark tale by taking a little look back at its production and the slipstream that followed the film...

Simply put, *Jaws* was and is a phenomenon. There s simply no other way to describe the film. Not only did it give many a man, woman and child a fear of water the very same substance which makes up so much of the human body and is a necessity to survive but it also sent shockwaves through the medium of film as a whole. This is the film that is largely deemed the first ever 'summer blockbuster' movie. Sure, there had been other films which had been described as blockbusters purely for the amount of money they took home, but *Jaws* and the 'summer blockbuster' tag was a sign of the times; a sign of a changing of the guard; a sign that New Hollywood was well and truly happening, and led by the likes of Spielberg, Martin Scorsese, Francis Ford Coppola, Roman Polanski, Brian De Palma, Stanley Kubrick and William Friedkin. The New Hollywood movement was already underway before *Jaws* swam into theatres, but it was Spielberg s shark movie which heralded the arrival of the event movie, which transcended the usual circles of cineastes and breached out into pop culture, causing ripples across society and warranting repeat viewings. But without getting too deep into the New Hollywood explosion, let s float our attention back over to the order of the day: *Jaws*.

Several years before Steven Spielberg would terrify cinemagoers with the story of a shark stalking the coast of Amity Island, the tale itself was being put together by Peter Benchley for a new novel. Having started the book in 1971, Benchley would see *Jaws* finally published in 1974. Making waves before it had even hit shelves, *Jaws* had already caught the

attention of Universal Pictures Richard D. Zanuck and David Brown before it had gone to print. After finally reading the novel, the duo immediately went about securing the movie rights to the book. The adaptation rights were eventually sold to Zanuck and Brown for an initial $150,000 and an extra $25,000 for Benchley to pen the movie s screenplay. In hindsight, Benchley shot himself in the foot. Broke at the time, the writer sold the rights before the novel went on to achieve such huge success levels and critical acclaim that he could have commanded a far higher fee. With the adaptation rights now in the hands of Universal, they turned their attention to a young director who had just made his theatrical debut with *The Sugarland Express* for them. That man, then sans beard, was a dreamer by the name of Steven Spielberg.

Before giving the nod to Spielberg, Universal had initially considered John Sturges, a veteran filmmaker who had helmed *The Old Man and the Sea* and *The Magnificent Seven*, and then actually offered the gig to *The Culpepper Cattle Co.* s Dick Richards. Unfortunately for Dick, his habit of regularly referring to the shark as a whale cost him the job, and the studio then gave in to the keen Spielberg. Having met with Zanuck and Brown, Spielberg read a copy of the then-unpublished *Jaws*, with it immediately reminding him of his 1971 TV movie *Duel*. The then 26-year-old Spielberg was officially signed on to direct the film in June 1973. By the time production on *Jaws* came around though, the director was getting itchy feet. Worried about being typecast by *Duel* and *Jaws*, Spielberg was eyeing a move to 20th Century Fox to helm *Lucky Lady*. Luckily for the studio, and us, Universal had a clause in their contract that put the kibosh on any move. And so Spielberg was still on board (with the promise of making whatever film he wanted once *Jaws* was done), a budget of $3.5 million was in place, and a shooting schedule of 55 days was planned. Principal photography commenced in May 1974, with the hope of having all shooting finished by June of that year. In one of the most notoriously awkward productions of its time, *Jaws* would wind up going massively over budget and over schedule. The shoot would last for 159 days, the first time that any film had gone 100 days or more over schedule, and the budget rocketed to the $9 million mark by the time all was said and done. Still a new face in the field, Spielberg thought his career was in ruins and nobody would ever hire him again.

Of all of the problems with *Jaws*, the two biggest issues were arguably the script and the shark itself. Peter Benchley initially put together the screenplay, but it was thought by Spielberg and some of the Universal execs that Benchley's story itself was a little too dark and focused too much on the shark at the tale s centre. Spielberg also wanted to change up the first two acts of the story and take out certain elements of *Jaws*, most notably removing the affair between Matt Hooper and Ellen Brody, as well as adding in splashes of his own such as making Chief Brody afraid of the water. Having been turned down by several screenwriters, Spielberg and Universal managed to get multi-award-winning Howard Sackler to do a rewrite of Benchley s screenplay. From there, Carl Gottlieb was brought in to lighten up some parts of the story in order to bring a likeability to the key characters and to emphasise the camaraderie on show between them. A long-time friend of Spielberg s, Gottlieb was also given a supporting role in the picture and then eventually progressed to becoming the primary screenwriter on the film, even completely rewriting large parts of the script.

Much like the production as a whole, the casting process for *Jaws* was also something that was dotted with troubles. Producers Zanuck and Brown were wanting Spielberg to cast well-known actors in the main roles of the film, whilst the director himself felt that lesser known, or even unknown, actors would make the story more accessible to audiences. After all, Spielberg already had his star: the shark. The first person to be cast was Lorraine Gary, with the wife of then-Universal president Sid Sheinberg given the Ellen Brody gig. Little did we know then that Gary would go on to appear in more *Jaws* films than anyone else (*Jaws*, *Jaws 2* and *Jaws: The Revenge)*. Next up was the charismatic Murray Hamilton, cast as the horrendous suit-wearing Mayor of Amity Island. Shortly after came Susan Backlinie, who was given the part of Chrissie (the poor girl who ends up as shark chow in the film's iconic opening moments) due to her work as a stuntwoman and the fact that she was willing to perform nude. The supporting characters and townsfolk were all largely played by actual residents of Martha s Vineyard, and Peter Benchley was even given a cameo as a news reporter. The cast still had three large holes though: Quint, Matt Hooper and Martin Brody. The first of these roles to be cast was Chief Brody, with the gig at first offered to Robert Duvall. Duvall, though, was more interested in playing Quint and so turned down the Brody role. Following that, gun-toting Charlton Heston was sniffing around the part, but he was ruled out when Steven Spielberg thought he was too much of a big name to play the police chief of a small town. After overhearing a conversation of Spielberg s at a party, Roy Scheider made the director aware that he d be interested in playing Brody. This was a Scheider who had just gotten himself a bit of a tough guy reputation after his wondrous turn in *The French Connection*, and so Spielberg was a little unsure of bringing him into the fold as Brody. The director would give Scheider a shot, and the actor would deliver one of the most famous performances in cinema history.

Whilst the casting of Chief Brody had its issues, the roles of Quint and Matt Hooper were still uncast with just 9 days left before production started. Quint had

been offered to both Lee Marvin and Sterling Hayden, with both passing on the part. Having just worked with him on *The Sting*, Zanuck and Brown suggested Robert Shaw. Shaw himself was hesitant as he wasn t a fan of Benchley s novel. After some prompting from his wife and secretary, Shaw took the job and decided to base his performance on eccentric local fisherman Craig Kingsbury. Kingsbury himself had a role in the film, playing the doomed Ben Gardner (yes, the one who s head is responsible for one of the most famous movie scares of all time).

For the role of Matt Hooper, all eyes were on some of Hollywood s brightest upcoming talents. Steven Spielberg initially wanted Jon Voight for the role, but that didn t happen. Then Jeff Bridges, Joel Grey and Timothy Bottoms were under consideration, but for one reason or another didn t end up with the job. One of Spielberg s friends, a certain George Lucas, suggested an actor by the name of Richard Dreyfuss who he d worked with on *American Graffiti*. Dreyfuss actually passed on the role initially, but after fearing he would never work again after seeing himself in *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz*, the actor quickly called Spielberg and agreed to take the part of Hooper. By this point in time, the script in place for the movie was far removed from Peter Benchley s *Jaws* in several respects. As such, Spielberg told Dreyfuss to avoid reading the novel and instead they made the Hooper character more likeable and more tailored to the actor.

Of all of the problems associated with *Jaws*, so many of the delays can be placed at the door of Bruce. For those of you who aren t as well versed in the history of *Jaws*, Bruce was the name given to the mechanical sharks used in the film, named after Steven Spielberg s lawyer, Bruce Ramer. There were three versions of Bruce made for the production, and none of them worked particularly well. The faux sharks were created by Rolly Harper s Motion Picture Equipment Rental, with *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* s Bob Mattey overseeing the work of around forty technicians on the project. Unfortunately, all of the Bruces

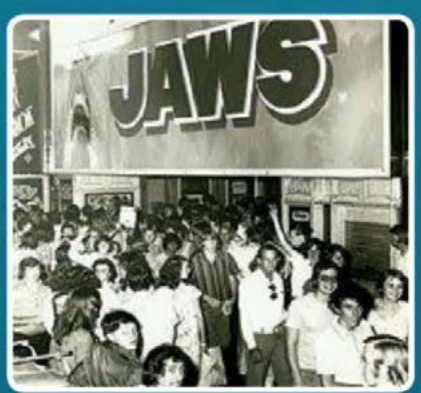
had a habit of playing up. If they weren t having trouble functioning, they were literally falling all the way to the ocean floor. Luckily, the shoot largely took place in relatively shallow waters, but it was still a monumental pain to have to get a team of divers to go searching for a misbehaving pneumatically-powered fake shark. It s no wonder that the troubled production saw the movie dubbed *Flaws* by some on set. Still, there was at least footage of real sharks that could be incorporated, with the production hiring Ron and Valerie Taylor to shoot certain footage over in Australia. One particular moment that always comes to mind is the scene in which Hooper is in a shark cage and gets attacked. To give a sense of scale and presence to the shark, a near-midget was placed in the shark cage next to a real shark. Whilst that man may have been small, his balls must ve been mighty big! At a time when the cage was luckily empty, the shark attacked and destroyed the cage. So impressive was the footage, Spielberg wanted to use it in his film… which led to Matt Hooper actually surviving. Yes, in Peter Benchley s *Jaws*, Hooper is killed at this particular moment, but the film's script was subsequently changed to have Dreyfuss character survive.

As well as the issues with Bruce, *Jaws* was also massively hindered by the very environment that it was shot in. A young and stubborn Spielberg was adamant that the movie needed to be shot in the Atlantic Ocean rather than a Hollywood tank, and as such random boats would pass into shot, the weather would halt production, the cast and crew would suffer from sunburn and sea sickness, and the equipment would regularly run into hitches down to the vast amount of water involved. Spielberg later claimed that from the standard 12-hour work days, they d only actually get to spend 4 hours filming, resulting in shooting 5 scenes on a good day, 3 on an average day, and 0 on a bad day. And then there was Robert Shaw, who would be described as a loveable rogue at best, an utter arsehole at worst. The veteran actor would regularly flee to Canada due to tax issues, grew to hate Richard Dreyfuss, and was binge drinking on most days. Still, you have to think that this only gave an extra edge to grizzled seadog Quint.

Despite all of the production problems, cast arguments, odd behaviour, and a *"floating turd"* (another loving nickname given to Bruce), *Jaws* would turn out to be a truly stunning film. Spielberg began to show his true brilliance, such as how he would use the real-life tension between Dreyfuss and Shaw to maximise the initial ill-feeling between Hooper and Quint, how he insisted that the art department have no red

in the film apart from blood in order to get the biggest impact, and how he had to rely on slow tension and strong characters once it became clear that he couldn t show the shark as much as he d initially envisioned. And then came *that* theme. Composed by John Williams and performed by tuba player Tommy Johnson, the shark theme is synonymous with *Jaws* and one of the great musical moments of cinema. In fact, the score as a whole is equally as delightful as it is terrifying, with Williams getting an Academy Award for his work.

When the final product came together and *Jaws* was finally released on June 20th, 1975 (the UK would get the film on December 26th of that year), it soon became a must-see movie. Taking $7 million during its opening weekend, the entire cost of production was quickly recouped in just a fortnight. After 78 days on release, Spielberg s movie overtook *The Godfather* as the highest-grossing film at the North American box office, surpassing that film's $86 million and bringing in $123 million during that initial run. International markets then got the film in December 1975, with *Jaws* breaking records in Spain, Mexico, New Zealand, Japan, and Singapore. By the time 1977 rolled around, *Jaws* had become the highest-grossing international release ever, and US theatrical re-releases in 1976 and 1979 helped push the gross to the $400 million mark. All of this helped to make *Jaws* the highest-grossing film of all time at that point, with George Lucas *Star Wars* finally surpassing those figures a couple of years later.



As well as cinematically, *Jaws* did equally impressive numbers on VHS and television broadcasts, and has even brought in strong numbers on DVD and Blu-ray through its various releases and anniversary editions. It also didn t harm that the film s initial theatrical run was accompanied by an advertising campaign that was unheard of in the film industry at that time, with Universal forking out $1.8 million on promotional work, including brief TV spots which focused merely on John Williams score and the equally iconic *Jaws* book cover/movie poster that had been created by Roger Kastel.

Having won three Academy Awards (Best Film Editing, Best Original Dramatic Score, and Best Sound), *Jaws* was a huge hit with critics and audiences alike. Sure, Spielberg had the hump that he d been overlooked and not even nominated for Best Director, but all were in agreement that *Jaws* was a truly special movie. But we all know, where there is success then there often comes imitators.

Whilst *Jaws* inspired a whole host of brilliant and bizarre merchandise, not to mention the classic Universal Studios ride (apparently a good place to propose), it also inspired a whole host of copycats. The film itself brought along a sequel in the shape of Jeannot Szwarc's criminally underrated *Jaws 2* in 1978, then the Dennis Quaid-starring *Jaws 3-D* in 1983 and the guilty pleasure known as *Jaws: The Revenge* in 1987. Whilst these got progressively worse in quality, there were some other out-and-out stinkers polluting the shark subgenre. Brazenly, some imitators at the time of *Jaws* release even outright used actual scenes from *Jaws* in their films, whilst others would replicate pretty much the exact story of Spielberg s movie. At that time there were the likes of *Tintorera*, *Mako: The Jaws of Death*, *The Last Shark*, and *Up from the Depths* which all mirrored *Jaws* in their story.

Additionally, there would be other similar efforts like *Orca: The Killer Whale*, *Piranha*, and *Barracuda* that would take the same premise and simply replace the beast at the centre of the story. After plenty of dross in the '70s and '80s, it wouldn t be until Renny Harlin s 1999 *Deep Blue Sea* that we d get a really noteworthy, entertaining and different shark film, although even then there were certain issues (sharks turning on ovens, anyone?). Since then, we ve had a truly mixed bag of gold and turds; for every *Open Water*, there s a *Snow Shark*, *Sand Sharks*, *Mega Shark vs. Mecha Shark* and a *Sharknado*; for every *The Reef*, there s a *Dinoshark*, *Jersey Shore Shark Attack*, *Sharktopus* and *Two-Headed Shark Attack*.

Despite the dross that is often churned out in the name of the shark movie these days, Steven Spielberg s Jaws still remains a seminal, vital, terrifying and hugely enjoyable piece of cinema that has yet to be topped in its field. So with that, let s raise a glass to Bruce as we celebrate 40 years of fear, 40 years of fascination, 40 years of fun, and 40 years of floating turds.

TO JAWS!

4TH TIME LUCKY?

by Ryan Pollard

Once more into the NEGATIVE ZONE, dear friends as we look ahead to yet another version of MARVEL's FANTASTIC FOUR, set to hit the multiplexes this summer ...

A contemporary re-imagining of Marvel s First Family, 20th Century Fox s *Fantastic Four* reboot centres on four young outsiders who teleport to an alternate dimension known as the Negative Zone, but the experiment goes haywire (as it always does in these kind of movies) and the result alters their physical form in shocking ways. With their lives now irrevocably upended, the team must learn to use their daunting new capabilities and work together to save Earth from a former friend turned enemy, Victor Domashev a.k.a. Doctor Doom.

With everything being kept very close to Fox s chest, everyone has been expecting the worst, but as a result of the two trailers that have been released, expectations are now high. The light-hearted characters that we know and love will be realised in a very serious, hard scientific manner, and that will set the tone for what s to come. Both Josh Trank (director) and Simon Kinberg (screenwriter) have stated that the film will be more grounded, character-driven, emotional, and a little more dramatic than the previous films. They've talked heavily about the fact that once you start stripping away the wisecracks and the levity of the Fantastic Four and actually think about what s happened to them and the changes they ve gone through, there s a darker edge at the heart of it.

In a recent interview, Trank said that if this film were in a video store, he wouldn t expect it to be in the superhero section, but more associated with the science fiction/horror category, citing the filmography of David Cronenberg, particularly both *Scanners* and *The Fly*, as his key influence on the more realistic approach. He says that he, *always viewed Fantastic Four and the kind of weirdness that happens to them and how they re transformed to really fall in line more with a Cronenbergian science fiction tale of something horrible happening to your body and [it] transforming out of control.*

This is more in tone with the Ultimate incarnation of the Fantastic Four, which Kinberg has cited as an inspiration for the characters personalities and traits. In those comics, Reed Richards loses all of his internal organs and has become one mass of a stretchy substance. That would be really horrific, and if you ground that in the real world with a convincing performance and superb special effects, we could expect some scary results, and all the better for it. This may be Trank s second feature, but *Chronicle* demonstrated that he thoroughly understands the genre, and just like *Chronicle*, can take it to directions we won t expect. Making it fun and dramatic, yet deadly serious when needed.

With it being a young cast, the family dynamic will be different than what we re used to in the comics, and though the cast may be much younger than we were expecting, they have so much potential based on their past work. Miles Teller has recently gained praise for *Whiplash* and Kate Mara impressed in TV s *House of Cards*. There was controversy surrounding Michael B. Jordan and Jamie Bell s casting as both the Human Torch and the Thing, but as we learned with Heath Ledger s Joker, let s not pre-judge before we see it. Also, the character of Doctor Doom will be different from what we ve seen with previous incarnations of the iconic super-villain, now an anti-social online hacker who uses Doom as his codename. Tim Blake Nelson will also be playing Harvey Elder, who in the comics becomes the Mole Man, so hopefully he won t get short-shrift as he ultimately was in 2008 s *The Incredible Hulk*.

A sequel has been planned for a potential July 14th, 2017 release date, just less than two years after the first instalment and is rumoured to involve Blake Nelson s Mole Man as the central villain. With Fox owning the movie-making rights to X-Men, they will inevitably plan a crossover movie with them really soon after *X-Men: Apocalypse* (2016) and *Fantastic Four 2* (2017), seeing how well

that has turned out for Marvel Studios with the Avengers movies. With Mark Millar (*Kick-Ass* and *Kingsman: The Secret Service*) being brought onboard to oversee storylines, seeds will probably be planted in this film that'll foreshadow and set-up this future team-up.

Hopefully, the reboot will mark a massive renaissance for the FF, especially after their recent cancellation in the comics and having such bad luck in cinema before. Arguably, the Fantastic Four is the one of the most important comic books in the history of Marvel, which started with Stan The Man Lee on the verge of quitting the comic book industry and doing something else in his life. Before then, his wife suggested that he write one comic that endears to the principles of what he d want to see, and from there he created the Fantastic Four with Jack Kirby. Marvel Comics was ultimately born, and other heroes like the Hulk and Spider-Man followed suit.

However, they never got the movie they deserved; the 1994 Roger Corman movie was never intended to be shown to anyone (no surprise to see why), and nobody loves Tim Story s movies (*Fantastic Four* and *Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer*) two critically panned blockbusters that never caught fire. Hopefully, the bad run may soon finally come to an end. With any luck, it ll distinguish itself from other superhero movies that have come before and (finally!) become the Fantastic Four movie we ve all been waiting for. It s clobberin' time!

WHAT WENT WRONG WITH TIM STORY S FANTASTI C FOUR MOVIES?

The years have not been kind to Tim Story s ill-fated *Fantastic Four* movies. Released in the wake of darker and more complex superhero movies such as Christopher Nolan s *Batman Begins*, Sam Raimi s *Spider-Man* trilogy, not to mention Bryan Singer s *X-Men* movies, the *Fantastic Four* films just looked completely infantile in comparison. They were incredibly shiny, vacuous, and hollow, somewhat cheesy, all over the place, and in no way honoured their own source material.

While both Human Torch and the Thing were decently portrayed by Chris Evans and Michael Chiklis respectively, both Mr and Mrs Fantastic themselves were poorly realised. Ioan Gruffudd gave a bland, unconvincing performance as Reed Richards and looked both embarrassed and uncomfortable being there. Jessica Alba brought absolutely nothing to the role of the Invisible Woman, presenting her bosoms and stripping down to her underwear at every opportunity despite the fact we re told she has a Ph.D. in genetic research (nope, don t buy it either). Hopefully, both Miles Teller and Kate Mara can right those wrongs. The Fantastic Four themselves were idealised to be ass-kicking role models for girls and boys alike, and that s why the Avengers and X-Men films have been incredibly successful across all ages. Yet here, the films suggested that, whilst it's okay for guys to be disfigured and look like Mount Rushmore, women have to flounce around in push-up bras all the time. The family dynamic had zero chemistry, and both Chiklis and Evans were the only ones that came close to resembling a budding relationship; their scenes together were the only redeeming parts of those films.

And then there s Doctor Doom himself. He s essentially the Darth Vader of the Marvel Universe, an egomaniacal tyrant wanting to prove his superiority over others and committing atrocities to accomplish his own needs. In the films, however, he's none of the above. Played by *Nip/Tuck* s Julian McMahon, Doom is relegated to a generic corporate type armed with limited ambition and no scientific interest whatsoever, with McMahon channelling a camp Kevin Spacey (groan). The Silver Surfer himself was criminally underused, poorly developed and lacked any of the depth or complexity that his comic-book counterpart had in spades.

The humour was also an issue, being overbearingly cheesy and overloaded with constant innuendo that in effect does the dirty on both children and adults alike. There are so many crude jokes interlaced throughout, such as whether Mr Fantastic can stretch any part of his body or whether the Thing can get it on with a girl, that it becomes a major problem. Try explaining all that to the kids! Yet this is unsurprising, considering the two films came from the man who has a track record of making many turgid and unfunny comedies, such as *Taxi* and *Ride Along*.

Oh, and don t even get me started on Galactus Stop making omnipotent alien creatures into huge nebulous balls of toxic space gas already!

Since their release, some fans have leapt to their defence by saying that it s faithful to the light-hearted spirit of the original comic books. Maybe they are, but that s certainly not enough to make them good films, and in the end, they re the perfect demonstration of how bad superhero movies can be. They lacked creativity, imagination and, ultimately, any heart, soul or even respect for Stan Lee and Jack Kirby s creations. Hopefully, Fox will have learnt their lesson this time around, and with the perfect combination of Josh Trank and Simon Kinberg, the future of the Fantastic Four appears to be in safe hands.

FANTASTIC FOUR blazes into UK cinemas on August 6th.

MASTER OF HORROR

by PAUL MOUNT

Genre on UK TV has had a boost over the past few years, thanks to satellite and cable stations, so STARBURST spoke to HORROR CHANNEL manager STEWART BRIDLE about life on the blood-drenched front line of the second most-watched movie channel and the fastest-growing channel in the UK...

The Horror Channel, formed in 2004, was rebranded as *Zone Horror* in 2006 before finally becoming simply *Horror Channel* in 2010 as part of the CBS partnership portfolio in the UK. Available on Freeview since March 2015, it now has a monthly reach of 5.3 million viewers; its profile has been raised enormously in recently by its acquisition of a run of classic *Doctor Who* episodes (backed by an award-winning promotional campaign), and themed film seasons of the works of visionaries such as David Lynch and Lucio Fulci.

STARBURST: Presumably it s pretty much a given that the manager of *Horror Channel* is going to be a self-confessed geek?
Stewart Bridle: Well, it wasn t quite so cool to be a geek when I was younger, but it s nice to be able to come out of the closet these days! All the stuff I watched and enjoyed as a kid was a great grounding for what I do now. I was a big superhero comic book reader, so I m loving these days when you get to see it all up on the big screen; just going to see something like *Avengers* is my eight-year-old brain up on the screen. These are great times to live in; technology and culture have finally caught up with stuff that we were enjoying in secret. Good times.

Is it essential that you know your way around the genre in your job?
Definitely, you've got to know what's out there; the new stuff that s coming along, and the history of the genre as well. There s such a wide range of horror material in various subgenres because when you re choosing movies from lists sent by

distributors some of them are not so obvious - not many films have 'terror' or horror in the title so anyone who s not well-versed might miss some great titles. So it helps when you can see a title on the list and think, *Yeah, that's definitely going to work, that's one I want.* Then you need to know how to piece those movies together if you re planning seasons and stunts, and it helps if you ve seen them and enjoyed them.

So what would be a fairly typical day in the life of the Channel Manager of *Horror Channel*?
On an average day, I could be screening new material which has been sent in to us or maybe there s some new stuff I haven t seen which I m checking out basically it s great fun getting paid to watch a lot of movies! I can be working on the strategy for the channel for the next few months, designing how we re going to use those movies and how we re going to use our series, planning the night s movies across a month or so, having meetings with other departments such as promotions and on-air, and just overseeing and making sure they re all on board with what we re doing, and creating the promos and other on-air elements. We ve got a fair-sized team. The company looks after a number of other channels as well, but *Horror* s always the fun one that everyone wants to work on because they really get to let loose some of their creative juices in the on-air promo department. We ve got some very talented people here, everyone s on board with what we re doing and wants to create the best channel we can and make it look great. There s a lot of love for *Horror Channel* here.

Can you tell us more about the actual process of acquiring titles and if you ve got your own personal wish list ?
Basically, whenever you re searching for product there s a number of distributors, independent distributors and studios who have horror material and other films on their books. I get a list from them of what s available, I go through and pick the titles some of them I ve seen and know, some I haven t seen, so I get DVDs and online screeners to have a look at and I make my selection and then the acquisitions department will negotiate to acquire those titles. There s always a number of titles I really want to see on the channel, but we re one movie channel amongst many and obviously everyone s always trying to get material for their channel so you re always up against other channels and bigger channels. The bigger titles are often taken, which is unfortunate, but sometimes we win and get some great titles. I m a John Carpenter fan, so for me the Holy Grail would be to get *The Thing* on the channel; it s one of my all-time favourites and I d love to get it! I watch out for it and hope it ll become available for us eventually, but I d love to get other Carpenter stuff like *Prince of Darkness*, *They Live* and *The Fog* so we could run a Carpenter season and maybe that ll happen. They re popular titles so if another channel picks them up before us they re out of bounds, but sometimes these things appear and we make a play for them. The original *Dawn of the Dead* is another one I d love to be able to get. But what we like to do which a lot of the other channels don t is to pick up some of the smaller independent stuff because there are some great titles out there which you won t see anywhere else. We can get some really great UK TV premieres; we ve just had the zombie movies *The Dead* and *Savaged*, which did well for us recently, and *The Day* which is an apocalyptic thriller. It s about giving movies like that the opportunity to reach a larger audience because some of them are fantastic and they really need to be seen and you re not going to see them on any other channel. We put them out there in prime time and give them as much exposure as we can and that s great for us.

So are you keen to support up-and-coming talent as well as promoting and screening lesser-known titles?
Absolutely, it s about trying to be slightly different from the other channels out there, bringing something new

and supporting up-and-coming film-makers. We ve been involved for the last two years in the *Short Cuts to Hell* competition, finding brand new filmmakers and giving them their start. *Hubert s Ghost*, a movie which won last year, is about to go into production, co-funded by us and it s got a great new team behind it. One of the priorities for the channel is to find and support new horror talent. Hopefully, that s the sort of thing we can move into more in the future. But it s really making sure that the genre in the UK thrives and survives, and it s fantastic if we re in a position to be a part of that.

Do you suspect that perhaps the channel still isn t taken seriously because of the reputation of its prior incarnations?
Well the channel s been around for ten years and it started as a very niche channel showing some low-end straight-to-DVD stuff, and it s taken a while for us to turn the channel around because we were probably seen as a very niche, down-the-bottom-end of the cable/satellite EPG kind of thing. But over the last five or six years, we ve begun to change that perception with our seasons devoted to the likes of Dario Argento and David Cronenberg; we ve shown that we know our stuff and we take it very seriously. But doing that kind of activity and showing those kinds of movies has recently turned things around. That was already underway when I came on board, so we were just continuing to hold that torch and make sure the channel continues to be entertaining above all, but also to have a wide breadth of material, to continue with seasoned programming, having some fun seasons and some seasons to show what we re really capable of, what we can really do and to hopefully be the authoritative voice.

Nabbing the rights to classic *Doctor Who* was a real coup last year, although in some ways the show seemed like a bit of an odd fit for *Horror Channel*...
We d been looking at *Doctor Who* for some time just because we felt it connected with our core demographic audience. People say it s a strange fit, but people had a lot of their earliest taste of horror with *Doctor Who* and that was the angle we were going for because some of those stories were quite terrifying when you re eight years old, and even today you can sit and watch them and some of the storylines can give you goosebumps. I m a huge fan myself so getting the opportunity to be around on the channel when we managed to reach an agreement with the BBC, and to be involved with choosing the stories and putting together the award-winning promotional campaign was so exciting. Just that series alone brought us to a whole new audience who probably wouldn t have checked us out before and now we re available on Freeview we re attracting viewers who are able to watch those old stories so it s been a great product for us.

How conscious are you of the British 9pm watershed in relation to the strength of the material you can show and is there anything you ve felt was too strong even for Horror?
We re not allowed to show pure horror before 9pm, otherwise Ofcom would be very unhappy. The schedule is almost split in half with the daytime section - which is mainly series and daytime movies, and we use that for cult fantasy/sci-fi series, keeping it within the same genre areas - and post-9pm is where we can let rip with the true horror movies and give fans what they want. We make a point of not censoring our movies. We ve shown things in the past such as *Martyrs*, which probably no other channel would touch; it s fantastic, and very gruelling to watch so we re not afraid of going to those dark places! There s never really been a conversation where we ve said *I don't think we should show that* because we have to be brave as a channel as long as we don t come to blows with Ofcom over it and as long as we show it at an appropriate time of the evening. We ve had some sexploitation stuff like *Bare Behind Bars* and *Nude Nuns with Big*

Guns, and they ve gone on to be some of the best-received product we ve put out. I think the viewers understand that we re prepared to be as brave as we can.

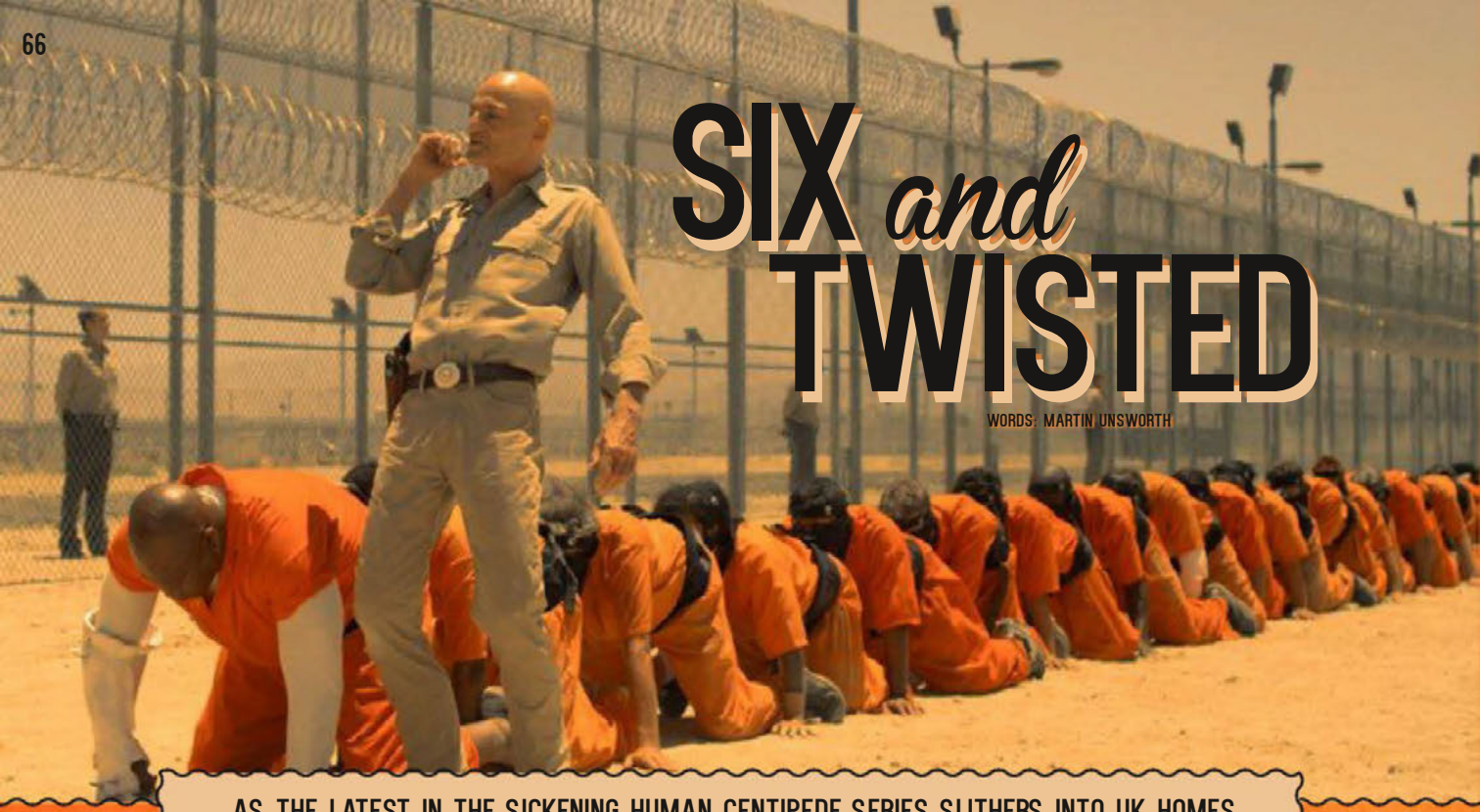
Do you ever worry about crossing that sometimes blurred line between horror and science fiction?
That s a good point. We ve had movies like *Dune*, which is very much a sci-fi movie but I think it s also a cult piece, which an audience into horror would generally enjoy. It comes down to a gut feeling if we look at a movie and think, *Well, actually that's pure science fiction* - something like *2001* for example because obviously we prefer anything we show to have a horror element. But I think the darkness in *Dune* s production design qualifies it, and recently we've had *The Arrival*, which is another sci-fi action piece but we felt it was a good fit and it worked for us. Also *Outlander*, which is as much a monster movie as anything else. Our daytime schedule has a lot of sci-fi in it because it's hard to find any horror material you can make work in daytime without cutting it to ribbons, which we don t want to do. So our daytime schedule is made up of sci-fi and fantasy, but we ve got a few horror movies in there, things like *The Stepford Children*, and a few Hammers which we can play during the day, but shows like *Wonder Woman* and *The Incredible Hulk* have been great successes for us because they re the kind of series that really connect with our core audience; they remember them and want to watch them again and of course, all the old *Star Treks* have been great for us to have around.

As a predominantly-archive channel, how concerned are you by the rise of on-demand and streaming services where people can pick and choose what they watch and when without recourse to the traditional TV schedule?
Obviously the rise of streaming and VOD services is a concern for all broadcasters, but linear TV still very much has a place in people s media consumption. There s still a lot to be said for providing people with a curated schedule for entertainment, something that someone has chosen and presented to them specifically and a shared experience of watching the same as other people at the same time. The convenience of services like Netflix is great, but sometimes there s just so much choice to wade through that it can be daunting and I like to feel that we take that away and give the viewer what we feel is something they could enjoy, whether that s an old favourite or something new.

What can viewers look forward to in the next few months?
We re still locking down our movies for the rest of the year but we ve got some great UK TV premieres coming up including *From The Dark* [vampire movie set in Ireland from Conor McMahon, director of 2012 s *Stitches*], which I think everyone should watch, *Banshee Chapter*, which is just crazy, Alex Chandon s *Inbred* which is great fun and a UK premiere from James Cullen Bressack who s become notorious latterly with *Hate Crime* being banned by the BBFC, but *Pernicious* is a little easier on the eye although there s still a high gore factor. We ve just secured *Cannibal Apocalypse*, which is a great 80 s masterpiece and in July, we re doing *Crawl or Die* which hasn t had a UK release on either DVD or VOD [see Independents Day in **STARBURST #407**]. So there s a mixture of everything there from new to mainstream to the back-end of the video nasty/VHS collection! A bit of everything for everyone!

Which seems to sum up the ethos of *Horror Channel*...
Exactly! We want to represent contemporary and classic subgenres after dark, and in the daytime to get as many of the great cult classic sci-fi fantasy shows as we can, but generally just to keep entertaining people whilst also flying the horror flag in the UK as best we can.

HORROR CHANNEL is available on SKY 319, Virgin 149, Freeview 70, Freesat 138 and TalkTalk 487.



SIX *and* TWISTED

WORDS: MARTIN UNSWORTH

AS THE LATEST IN THE SICKENING HUMAN CENTIPEDE SERIES SLITHERS INTO UK HOMES (UNCUT, TO BOOT!) WE GOT THE CHANCE TO QUIZ WRITER/DIRECTOR TOM SIX AND STARS DIETER LASER AND LAURENCE R. HARVEY ABOUT THE CONTROVERSIAL FILMS.....

TOM SIX

STARBURST: The first *Human Centipede* film was inspired by a punishment you thought of for child molesters, so was it a natural progression for you to set the third film in a prison?
Tom Six: Absolutely. I used innocent victims in *The Human Centipede*, and this time I wanted to make the circle round and use my original punishment idea for part three, and that's why I came up with the idea of doing it in a prison.

The character of Bill Boss is completely over the top and very sadistic, how did you go about writing that role?
I wanted to have the complete opposite of Dr Heiter, who was researched and very meticulous. And this time I wanted a complete asshole! A vile, sadistic guy who screams, who has no holdbacks whatsoever! It was a very big joy to write all that and Dieter gave it everything! We loved creating that together. He's a very annoying character as well, and that's what I love.

Both sequels have been 'meta' in approach; it's quite a bold way of filmmaking, almost deconstructing cinema and the audiences, each film digesting the previous. At what point did you hatch that plan?
When I was writing part two, I was travelling all over the world to film festivals. People reacted so strongly to the films, they came up with ideas and plans for new films, so I wanted to integrate that in the story. Everyone said 'what if a maniac out there makes a human centipede?' And I thought that was a great idea! I was playing with that already, and I thought that guy must not have any medical knowledge, which makes it worse. So that film was based on a guy watching the first *Human Centipede*, and then in the end, what I wanted to do was make a movie centipede. Each film can literally be connected and be digested by each film. So part two begins with the ending of part one, part three begins with the ending of part two, so you can literally connect the films. I thought that was a very cool idea.

Has there ever been anything you'd think of that would be 'too much' to film?
No, nothing! When I write my scripts, I enjoy them so much, I see the comedy in there. A film is all fake; latex and such. In my opinion, all three films are comedies, so I never think that things are going too far. Because I know it's all fake! I enjoy pranking with the audience, I love that people are upset. I see my films as uppercuts! I love it when people hate my movies or absolutely love my movies. I would be offended if people reacted in a mediocre way - 'oh, they were alright, what's for dinner?' I hate that!

***The Human Centipede III* seems to have breezed through the BBFC, is that a little surprising since the second one had so much trouble?**
Absolutely! They gave us such a hard time with part two, but under a lot of pressure; I think the whole world was looking at them 'what will they do with part three?' Part three is not as gory, I think and maybe the head of the board has changed, I don't know. But it came through without any cuts, and that's pretty surprising. I'm very happy with that as well, of course because now people can see the film as it was intended, but it was surprising!

Does it bother you that some people don't get the humour behind the films, and think that you're just all out to shock?
A lot of critics, what I saw in America, are paid to do the critique, but didn't like the first two films. Then I think 'why are you sitting there, then? You hate the films already, before you see them!' They are very sour. I make the films for the fans and lovers of this kind of films. I don't make the films for the critics. But again, I enjoy to see those sour faces watch my films. They have to sit through them, and I love that! And their reviews make great marketing. They think 'I've made this great piece where I break down Mr Tom Six'... and it only helps me!

What's next for you, now that the Centipede's finished?
I am working on *The Onania Club*. That will be a film again with dark comedy and very horrifying stuff. It's just the way I write my films so it will be an uppercut again for the audience, and I think people will either love it or hate it. But the most important thing, it's very original; that's what I aim for. I don't want to make films that I've already seen before. I can't tell you the premise yet, because it's so simple again, and I'm sure *South Park* will easily use it again for their work [laughs]. We're going to shoot it at the end of this year, so hopefully it all goes right, and we'll have it next year.

DIETER LASER

STARBURST: What was it that drew you to the first *Human Centipede* film?
Dieter Laser: I got an e-mail from Six Entertainment by the producer Ilona Six who invited me to a meeting with writer/director Mr Tom Six in the lobby of the Berlin Hilton. Tom had seen me in the German movie *Führer Ex* and wanted to offer me the leading part in his film *The Human Centipede*. He told me the whole story in the real time the film would take; very vividly, very detailed, even with some precise camera angles, full of visionary passion and at the end of the story I said "*I love your passion, I'm very impressed by your competence, we have to do this!*" Five minutes later, Ilona and I had a deal by handshake. But when the script arrived at home I got shocked! Sewing people together by a retired surgeon had been no problem for me in Tom's storytelling. Dr Heiter might have become very revengeful and mad due to the German law which forces even the most famous scientists to retire at the age of 65 and to migrate to other countries. But only now while reading the script, I realised the consequences for the digestive tract of *The Human Centipede*! Only now I saw what the audience would see in their mind's eye: human shit floating from ass to mouth. "*Embarrassing! I have to lose a reputation in German film and television, not to speak about the theatre!*" After some lament, I sat down on my ass and started to work on the character. That happens mostly in my kitchen during the silence of the early morning hours. Then I discovered the deeper layers of Tom's script: before his retirement, Dr Heiter's speciality had been separating Siamese twins. Wasn't it 'The Angel of Death' the German mass-murderer, Dr. Josef Mengele, who experimented with twins? What about kicking these criminal clowns in their balls? To expose these 'anal retentive' Nazi doctors to ridicule! I had found my narrative key for the character. Phone call to Tom: "*May I call him Joseph?*" And the fun started!

The character of Bill Boss is completely over the top and very sadistic, did you have fun with that role?
Same pattern as with Dr Joseph Heiter. After I had found my guidance - my narrative keys for Bill Boss: 'the cartoonish alien' – 'the desert-snake' – 'the ageless evil' - a 'creature from beyond' in the disguise of a 'comic-strip warden' - then, with these narrative tools, it became pure fun to realise Tom's vision. To play as much over the top as possible, the yelling monster, the stupid badass, the mean coward, the sadistic butcher, the heartless idiot, the liar and cheater, the criminal imposter etc.

Was it true that you walked out just before filming was due to begin? What was the story behind that?
Sir Tom, Lady Ilona and me, we are a dream-team and never ever had any differences on location - work just flows fearlessly and smoothly in a very polite, even tender atmosphere - Tom is genius! But as it happens, even in a dream-team creative differences can appear during the long, long process of pre-production and the long, long waiting time for

the script. When the script finally arrived, I took the '100% Politically Incorrect' one hundred percent too seriously. I was blindfolded, only saw the extreme horror, didn't realise the comedy in it, was shocked to the bones, afraid and stubborn and it escalated into my refusal to play the part. Thank God, Tom did not give in, he didn't change the script; but he also didn't give up to try to convince me and finally he managed, in a four-hour meeting in the Sheraton Restaurant at the Airport of Amsterdam, to open my eyes for the hilarious, vitriolic comedy in his script, and this meeting triggered the beginning of a wonderful creative time by developing together the character Bill Boss. Sheraton Restaurant Airport Amsterdam became our historical and ritual meeting point: same time of day, same table and a 'crazy actor' who isn't ashamed to play at this table different versions of all his scenes in the script; offering his director several choices - under the astonished, slightly amused and slightly worried eyes of other guests who sometimes came to our table and asked Tom if they could be of some help. Those meetings even intensified our friendship and our artistic understanding and led in the end to a virtually 'wordless' communication during the shooting because our common goals were already precisely defined and even practiced, by Sheraton 'table-dancing' up to the tiniest details. Thank you Tom Six!

The film deliberately goes all-out to be offensive, what was the most outrageous part or line for you to perform?
After Tom had opened my eyes for the comic-strip and after I had found my narrative keys, even the chewing of clitorises or the raping of a woman in her coma wasn't a problem anymore.

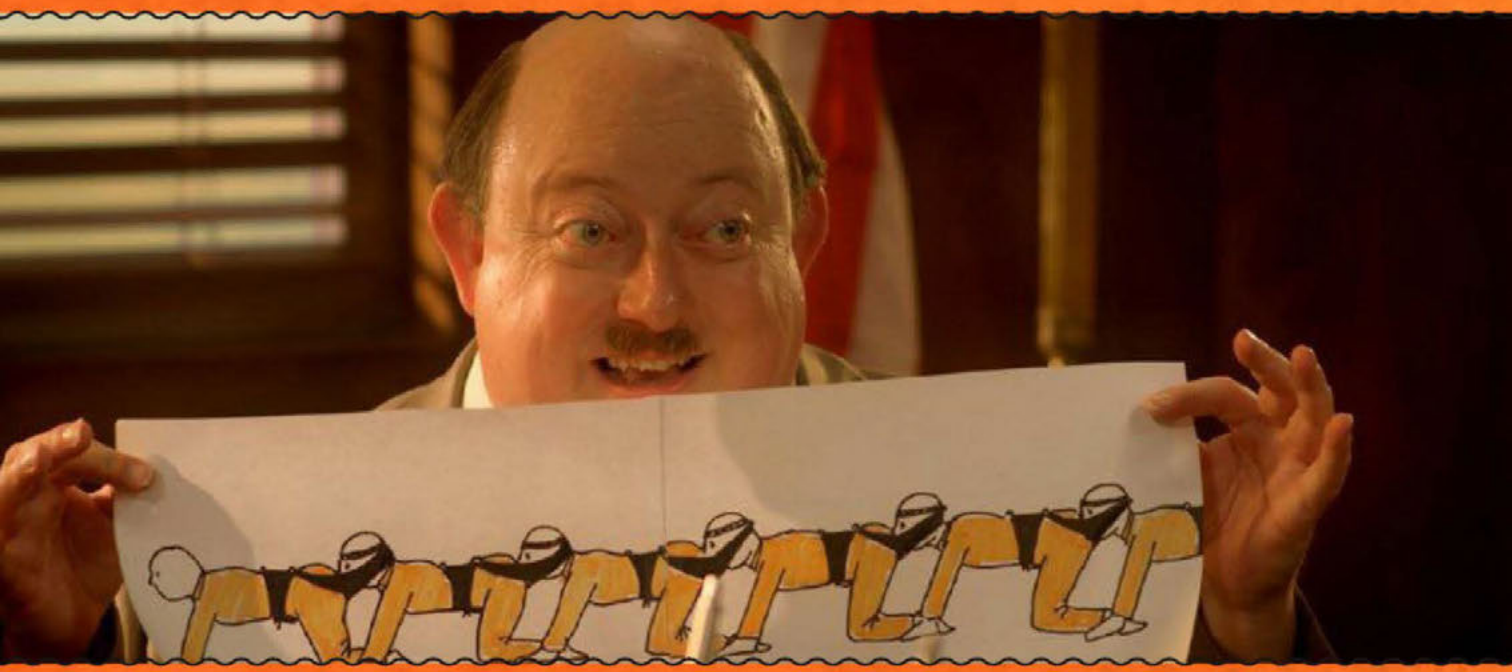
LAURENCE R. HARVEY

STARBURST: Your character is actually one of the sanest in the film (which says a lot!), was that a refreshing change considering the previous film?
Laurence R. Harvey: Well, the character isn't sane (just look at what he proposes), but stood next to Bill Boss, I guess anyone would appear sane! I guess Dwight's madness is more to do with his reduction of people to facts and figures. He appears to sympathise with the prisoners that Bill mistreats, but actually it's more about the unnecessary costs that the violence perpetrated by Bill (both financial and logistical) involves. Also, he's very 'proper', in the sense that he doesn't want to appear to condone Bill's excesses and their illegality, but still kowtows to the position of authority.

How was it working opposite Dieter, since he gives such an intense performance?
Dieter works very much with props and costume in a meticulous way when preparing the scene and it helps him map out the character's 'territory' in the scene (both physical & psychological). But the familiarity with the physical aspects frees him up to go full steam ahead with the outrageous character that he created. It *IS* a larger than life character, and Dieter is almost spoofing his own performance in the original film. But in this film, Dieter is pitted against a lot of different styles of acting in an almost gladiatorial way. The scenes with Robert [LaSardo, who loses his crown jewels to Bill Boss] are just electrifying.

Do you think the humour and satire in the film has been lost on a lot of the audience so far?
I think that's a case with some people - especially if they were expecting something more traditionally horror, like a splatter comedy, say. But I think the only thing that fans could've expected before the film came out is that it was going to be completely different from anything before. Now that it's out and fans are talking amongst themselves, there are a large group that 'get' Tom's love of awkwardness, and keeping the audience off-balance. The final film is more like *Prisoner Cell Block H*-meets-*Something About Mary*. But the previous films divided their audience hugely, and both films initially got terrible reviews, now they're regarded as classics, although people are still split over whether they prefer part one or part two. And I'm sure that this film will also develop its own band of fans who find this film their favourite in the series. I think a number of people are coming to this as their first *THC* film, because the trailer is so comedic, and not the yucky gore-fest they may have dismissed the series as.

THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE III (FINAL SEQUENCE) is showing at selected UK cinemas from July 10th, and released on DVD/Blu-ray and VOD on July 13th. Read our review on page 84.



HORROR Obscura

This month, the rotting Robin Pierce is caretaker of Horror Obscura for the first of a trilogy of features looking at HAMMER FILM's FRANKENSTEIN series...

SOME ASSEMBLY REQUIRED

Part 1
The Fifties

The fifties were a lean time for the horror industry. With very few exceptions, both audiences and studios had turned their attention to science fiction. It was the space age, people were concerned about the atom bomb and its effects. In the age of Sputnik and cold war paranoia, where there was a red under every bed, the only witch trials were self-promoting paranoids looking for communist subversives.

While psychologist and guardian of righteousness, Frederic Wertham successfully pilloried the horror comics of William Gaines's EC publishing house, the world moved on and forgot both a certain Transylvanian Count and a European Baron. After all, what were historic tales of vampires and shambling human patchwork experiments when there were greater contemporary threats looming from the vastness of space and the small but deadly humble atom?

Hammer, of course, had already made an impact with three sci-fi films. Truncated versions of the popular BBC sci-fi serial The Quatermass Experiment (subtly retitled The Quatermass Xperiment to exploit the 'X' certificate it sought and was awarded), its sequel and the unrelated, but similarly titled, X The Unknown had seen the studio achieve some success. But now it was 1956 - time for Hammer to raise the stakes, in more ways than one.

The original idea to bring Baron Frankenstein back to the big screen and in stunning colour for the first time was the brainchild, surprisingly enough, of two American producers, Max J. Rosenberg and Milton Subotsky. They envisioned a story called 'Frankenstein and the Monster', which would have featured Boris Karloff, but unfortunately, the script presented to Hammer head honcho James Carreras only ran to 55 minutes – far short of the time required. And there was another, far greater problem.

Universal Pictures had been alerted to the plans to make a Frankenstein film as a result of Hammer registering their title. Frankenstein was one of their most valuable properties and to say they were protective of their copyright would be an understatement. Their first act was to threaten a lawsuit in case Hammer's plans would contain any elements that were unique to their classic films of the thirties and forties – especially the instantly recognisable make-up applied to Karloff by Jack Pierce.

Subotsky and Rosenberg were tasked with expanding their script; making sure that Universal's toes weren't trodden on, but the draft they submitted would have been beyond Hammer's thrifty means to film. The only element ultimately retained in Hammer's The Curse of Frankenstein was that of Victor Frankenstein narrating his story from his cell. Originally, Victor would be telling his tale from a room in an asylum, but in the finished production this was changed to a prison cell as Victor is about to be executed.

Subotsky and Rosenberg were paid for their work, but didn't receive a screen credit of any kind for the film that really put Hammer on the map. They, however, had their own revenge when they founded Amicus Productions a few years later, and became Hammer's main rival throughout the sixties and into the seventies.

So, with Universal keeping a watchful eye and a script in hand that avoided direct plagiarism of their material while retaining some of Mary Shelley's story, preproduction could begin.

Peter Cushing, a character actor best known at the time for his appearance as Winston Smith in the BBC's adaptation of George Orwell's 1984, was cast in the central role of Victor Frankenstein.

Veering away from Colin Clive's histrionic portrayal of a crazed Henry Frankenstein in Universal's films, Cushing played an outwardly rational scientist who conducts his experiments with a cool and clinical detachment in his quest for knowledge.

The Creature (we can't call it a 'monster'– that's what Universal called theirs) was a bit more problematic and also needed a copyright-avoiding change of direction. The call went out that Hammer were looking for someone large to play the role. Eventually, it came down to either Carry On film favourite Bernard Bresslaw or another tall, jobbing character actor named Christopher Lee.

As often happens, the final casting decision came down to one critical factor – money. Bresslaw's agent demanded £10 per day, while Lee's asked for £8. Thus, the deal was struck and horror history was made.

Shortly after casting, Lee would complain to Cushing that he had no lines, Cushing's reply of "You're lucky – I've read the script" was the beginning of an enduring friendship and film partnership that would rival that of Boris Karloff and Bela Lugosi.

The make-up for the Creature went through several trial versions, including one that reportedly looked like a werewolf and another that Lee recalled made him look like a pig. None of these attempts were accepted. The final version seen in the film was literally thrown together at the last minute with household materials and mortician's wax. No latex or rubber facial appliances were used by make-up artist Phil Leakey, so the make-up had to be reconstructed from scratch daily.

Casting, script funding, and make-up all in place, filming commenced at Bray studios on the first ever British horror film that utilised the lavish Eastmancolor and plenty of Kensington Gore – the nickname for the fake blood used.

The Curse of Frankenstein is told in an extended flash back, and follows the story of Victor Frankenstein, who is making an eleventh hour confession to a priest before his appointment with the guillotine.

Left in charge of the Frankenstein fortune and estate at a very young age, he engages Paul Krempe (Robert Urquhart) as his tutor and begins to study the sciences with zeal. This becomes an obsession, as his early experiments with reanimating a dead puppy lead towards creation of life in something that has never lived rather than merely restoring life.

To accomplish this, he needs the raw materials to build a body, beginning with that of a highwayman hung from a gibbet as a warning to others. Discarding what he can't use in an acid bath, he begins his task of assembling his experiment. The parts he needs, he sources from other means. Eyes bought from a charnel house, the hands of the world's greatest sculptor… but the brain takes Victor's obsession to a new level.

Inviting a lonely, elderly scientist to his home in the guise of friendship and hospitality, Victor 'accidentally' pushes him through a bannister to his death. In a gesture of seeming charity and respect, Victor offers that the body be interred in the Frankenstein mausoleum.

That evening, as Victor claims the brain, Paul discovers what's happening and in a struggle, the glass jar containing the brain is smashed, damaging it. Also damaged is the friendship.

Victor completes the Creature, repairing the brain as best he can.

But rather than being a perfect Adonis with the brain of a genius and the hands of an artist, the Creature is a brutal thug who rampages through the countryside, tormenting a blind man before murdering him, and presumably his grandson, before Victor and Paul shoot the creature in the face - specifically, the eye. The howl of anguish screamed by the Creature is all too real as Lee had a sachet of blood in his hand that would burst upon being slapped onto his face. Sadly Lee didn't close his eye in time and the chemical stung him badly.

You'd think that burial would be the end of the matter, but Victor exhumes him and, although slightly more sympathetic now (due perhaps to the lobotomy by bullet), the Creature goes on a rampage again, discovering a curious Mrs Frankenstein. Sadly, during the ensuing struggle both fall into Victor's acid bath, dissolving the evidence that Victor didn't murder his wife, which is why he's a condemned man pleading his innocence to anyone who'll listen.

The film ends with a shot of the guillotine, presumably putting an end forever to the Frankenstein case.

The critics of 1957 weren't happy. Their gentle sensibilities were shaken. The film was decried as being for only for sadists, repulsive and one short step away from a visit to a torture chamber. But the public loved it. It made $7 million in the USA alone – not bad against a budget of £65,000.

A sequel was needed.

Hammer were already considering a sequel four months before The Curse of

Frankenstein was released. But except for registering a title Blood of Frankenstein, and creating a suitably lurid poster featuring Christopher Lee's Creature, they had nothing ready, other than a brief first draft of a script. The contents and direction of the script and whether they featured the Creature somehow surviving are unknown. It was hastily rewritten and retitled The Revenge of Frankenstein, with the emphasis being not on the Creature, but in a final departure from Universal's series, on Victor himself. The films would follow the ongoing story of the creator in his scientific quest, not the hapless creature forever being pursued.

So how DID Frankenstein cheat death at the blade of the guillotine?

Easy – off-camera, it was the priest hearing Frankenstein's confession and accompanying him to his execution who suffered a sudden departure of head from neck. This left Victor to change his identity and three years later, to set up a medical practice in Carlsbruck under the name of Dr Victor Stein.

One would think that as he's in hiding, Victor would choose to operate under the radar rather than draw attention to himself, but no. He's the most popular doctor in all of Carlsbruck, loved by all except the medical council, who he dismisses, as he treats both the rich, and in his spare time - for free, the poor.

However, his sloppiness in retaining his anonymity soon betrays Victor as he is recognised by member of the medical panel, Dr Hans Kleve (Francis Matthews, better known as the voice of Captain Scarlet). Hans, of course, wants to join Frankenstein in his experiments – which are actually in an advanced stage. The body has already been prepared and is standing upright in a clear tank half-filled with some sort of vapour. This one is a bit more perfect than the previous version (with apologies to Christopher Lee) and all it needs is a brain. Victor has a willing donor in his hunchbacked assistant Karl (Oscar Quitak) who fancies ditching his twisted form and occupying a new one.

While convalescing at the hospital for the poor, Karl Mk 2 is released from his restraints by a sympathetic nurse played by Eunice Gayson, who would be the first Bond girl four years later, playing Sylvia Trench in Dr No. Karl returns to Victor's laboratory and burns his old body in the furnace, but is disturbed by a brutal janitor who sadistically beats him, damaging his still recovering and sensitive brain.

Karl's new body begins to corrupt rapidly after the beating, and he begins to develop cannibalistic tendencies. Deformed and crazed, he disturbs Victor at a reception, publicly using his real name of Frankenstein when he pleads for help.

Ignoring Hans' advice to leave Carlsbruck and hauled before the medical council, Victor denies being THE Victor Frankenstein, so the council exhume the body in the cemetery, where they see the robes of the priest. That is evidence enough.

However, the patients at the hospital for the poor catch up with Victor first, realising that they've been unwitting donors to his experiment; that their amputated limbs have been harvested in the name of science, and during his morning rounds, they turn on him and as a mob, tear him apart, leaving him to die.

But all is not lost.

Hans shows the body to the police, claiming to have tried and failed to save his life. The authorities are satisfied that rough justice has been done, leaving Hans to transplant Victor's brain to another body, which had been prepared earlier, and which, presumably in an early cloning experiment, is identical to that of Peter Cushing.

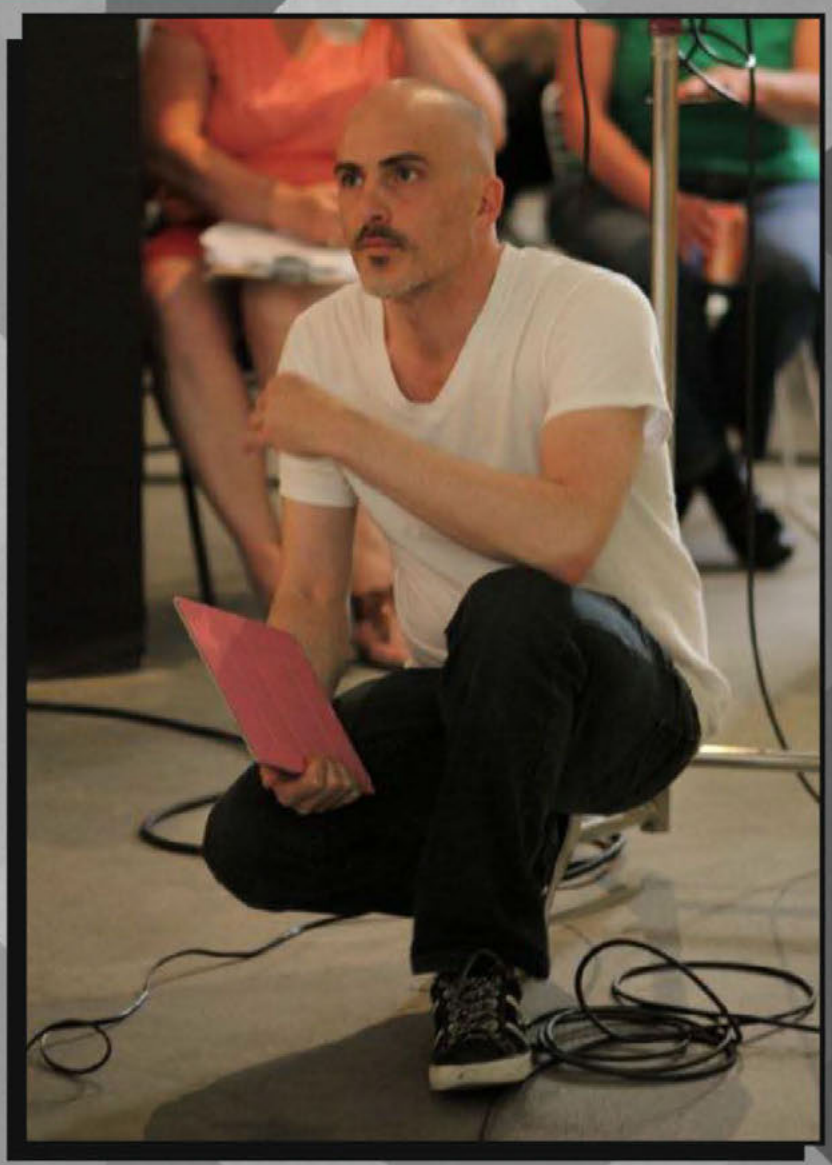
The film closes in London's Harley Street as Hans introduces some patients to their doctor – a familiar looking man, now going by the name of Dr Franck.

The Hammer Frankenstein story will continue in issue 415...

by Martin Unsworth

MICHAEL MEDAGLIA

This month, we cast the INDEPENDENTS DAY spotlight on a director whose latest film is set to take the festival circuit by storm. With two hit shorts already to his name, MICHAEL MEDAGLIA is ready to take it to the next level



STARBURST: What influenced you to become a filmmaker?
Michael Medaglia: I went to an engineering university. They had an agreement with a neighbouring art school: if you were enrolled in one school, you could take classes at the other. So the engineering students could take fine art classes at the art school and vice versa. On a lark, I took a basic film class where they essentially handed you a camera and sent you off on your own to make short films. That was when I made my first film ever. It was just awful. My teacher didn t like it. But it was too late - I was hooked! I haven t stopped making films since.

Your early short Kitty Kitty was remarkable, what inspired you to write that?
Thanks for the compliment! The inspiration came from a book called Parasite Rex. It's a non-fiction book about parasites. It s truly frightening because it s all real stuff. I read about Toxoplasmosis. It's such a bizarre disease because we know it alters human behaviour; a large percent of the population has it, yet we still don t know how it affects us. I wrote several versions of the film - all revolving around a woman, a lost cat, and paranoia. Nothing seemed to work. Then I turned it into a horror/love story and it all seemed to click.

Did you get any backlash from cat fans?
Haha. Thankfully, no cat fans have written me nasty letters. Neither have any cats.

Deep Dark seems to sum up the life of the troubled artist, what can you tell us about how that story came about?
I wrote it a while ago, in 2008. At the time I was having trouble balancing my love life and creative life. It was a juggling act and I was dropping balls left and right. I think that became the inspiration for the love triangle that plays out between Hermann, The Hole and Devora. I came up with the idea for the artist s muse as a talking hole in the wall and the whole thing took on a life of its own. The idea is that she was this sentient being that has inspired artists throughout human history; artists who might not be incredibly talented but had a certain je ne sais quoi that made them successful, I found this really interesting. I wanted her to be a sympathetic character too; probably because I m a huge fan of old horror movies like Dracula, Bride of

DEEP DARK

Frankenstein, etc. The creatures were evil but we also identify with them.

How did you go about funding the film?
This was my first feature, and that s always tough going. No one will trust you to make your first feature until you ve already made your first feature! I don t think that will ever change about the film industry. So, in order to help get Deep Dark made, I wrote Kitty Kitty. While their stories are different, the tone is very similar. Upon reading the script for Deep Dark, producers or investors could see the film could go a lot of different ways (not all good). With Kitty Kitty, I could show them just what I would do with this kind of material. With short film in hand, I shopped the Deep Dark screenplay to several producers. Several turned it down. Producer David Woods is a good friend and was behind the project from the beginning. After a lot of leg work, I connected with Lara Cuddy. She eventually brought in the Freeman Brothers and we had the final team. Lara is actually our main producer (and is amazing), but everyone played their part equally well. Once the team was assembled, the funding came a little easier. We eventually managed to finance the film with a mix of private equity and state funding.

Was there a fear of going too far 'out there' with the bizarre elements of the film?
Great question! Yes, we were trying to ride the delicate line between horror and dark humour. There s a lot of moments that are humorous and creepy at the same time. We didn't want to hit anyone on the head and say okay this part is supposed to be funny. The audience can make their own choice whether to laugh or not. I think they re smart enough to figure things out on their own. I m looking forward to hearing some nervous laughs at the screenings!

I think my biggest fear was that our most important scenes are an actor talking to an inanimate object. He's literally talking to a hole in the wall. I wasn t sure if people would want to go along for that kind of ride. Even if they did, how long until that got boring? I knew it would require an incredibly talented actor to pull it off. I have to hand it to Sean McGrath, who plays the role of Hermann. He did an amazing job. Along with the help of some good camera work and a fantastic voice performance by Denise Poirier, I think we were able to make it work. Speaking of Denise Poirier, working with her was a dream come true for me! When I first wrote the script I had heard (in my head) the voice of MTV s Aeon Flux as the voice of The Hole. The Hole s voice needed to be commanding, yet hypnotically alluring. When it came time to record The Hole s dialogue, I contacted Denise out of the blue. I really wasn t sure how she d feel about the script but she wrote to me immediately after reading it and said she was in . I was elated.

What feedback have you had (if any) on the film from the art world?
I haven't gotten any feedback on the film yet, but prior to going into production I got some feedback on the script. I asked several artists, as well as a couple of gallerists, to read it. They were all fairly positive about it. I think they saw it for what it was: a sort of caricature of the art world. The art world we present in the film is a bit skewed but, then again, so is the reality of the rest of the film. The story is told from Hermann s perspective, which is rather skewed in general.

KITTY KITTY

How was the experience of filming a feature as opposed to shorts?
When it comes to knowing how to tell a story the two are very similar, but with features, it s really a marathon and not a sprint. As the shooting days go on, it gets both physically and mentally exhausting. It's at this point you have to remember not to get too myopic and lose sight of the picture as a whole. As a director, that's probably your most important job. As this was my first feature, I really wasn't sure how things would go. You hear so many horror stories about directors having meltdowns, etc. I'm happy to say things went just fine. The tone on set was pretty mellow, which is nice. I really enjoyed the experience and I can't wait to direct another feature.

Which brings us to the natural question, what's next for you?
As our festival run for Deep Dark continues, I m in the process of writing the next script. I enjoy working in the horror/fantasy genre and this new one will be something along those lines.

You can find out more about MICHAEL MEDAGLIA's feature DEEP DARK and learn of future screenings by heading to the ***deepdarkmovie.com*** *website.*

DEEP DARK

CERT: TBC / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: MICHAEL MEDAGLIA / STARRING: SEAN MCGRATH, DENISE POIRIER, MONICA GRAVES / RELEASE DATE: TBC

When Roger Corman's A Bucket of Blood hit the screens in the '60s, it explored that almost Faustian dilemma: how far would you go to succeed in art? While the lead character in Michael Medaglia's debut feature doesn t actually sell his soul to the Devil, it s not far from it at times.

Hermann Haig (McGrath) is a struggling (read: delusional) artist who s convinced his mobiles (yes, those things you hang from the ceiling that usually only entertain young babies) are works that are gallery-worthy. The local dealers don t think so, and after his latest disaster, he goes to visit his uncle, who had become rich by selling his work.

When Hermann rents his uncle's former studio apartment for two weeks, he discovers the secret of his success and uses it for his own means. The room comes with a unique feature: a hole in the wall from which a series of notes appear. Then out comes a squishy ball, which he's compelled to use on his art piece. Once it s seen, his luck changes; the head of the gallery signs him up, and he is suddenly recognised in a new light. When he goes back to the studio, a sexy female voice comes from the hole. It tells him what he should do, and under her guidance, Hermann's dreams come true. As would be expected, however, this comes with a price.

Deep Dark is a brutally skewed look at the art world and the vacuous types that occupy it. Be it those who hope to become successful, or the critics and dealers whose opinion can make or break a career. The horror element doesn t take away from what is a biting satire on the business; its fickleness and the manipulation of talent, or lack of it. Rivalry, jealousy and sexual urges all play a part in Hermann's rise, and ultimately lead to the downfall of several characters.

The surreal, horrific elements certainly won't be to everyone's taste, but the result is satisfying and provides the viewer with that age-old moral dilemma can we live with ourselves after cheating for success in our work? Like many, Hermann begins to believe the hype surrounding his overnight good fortune, and soon realises he needs the collaboration with The Hole to continue for the sake of his art.

The black, comedic characters wouldn t be out of place in a Lynch movie, and the film boasts a visceral feel not unlike something from a Cronenberg picture. There s a prevalence of the thought that art eats you up inside and consumes you. Deep Dark is a thoroughly engaging cautionary tale, which despite the unnatural elements, is remarkably relatable.

THE HILLS AREN'T ALIVE

By Dominic Cuthbert

As this month sees the HD debut of the offbeat musical horror comedy THE HAPPINESS OF THE KATAKURIS, we look back at TAKASHI MIIKE's bizarre classic

After the genre-bending fever dream of *Audition* and the extremity of Yazuka movie *Dead or Alive*, prolific director Takashi Miike surprised many with a surrealist comedy-cum-horror musical, billed as *The Sound of Music* meets *Dawn of the Dead*. His films often put characters through the emotional wringer to their physical and psychological limits, and equally the audience to theirs with explicit violence and sexual content. *The Happiness of the Katakuris*, on the other hand, is a genre-hopping mishmash of style and narrative that is surprisingly well structured and oddly affectionate. It wasn't actually released in the UK until 2003, two years after its original Japanese release, and now it arrives on Blu-ray, courtesy of Arrow Video.

Screenwriter Kikumi Yamagishi loosely based the film on the 1998 South Korean black comedy *The Quiet Family* (directed by Jee-woon Kim), where a family open up a bed and breakfast in a remote hiking region. Their first guest kills himself and, desperate to avoid the bad publicity, they bury the body themselves. But the corpses keep piling up and the fraught family struggle to keep their secrets hidden. This is the same initial set-up *for The Happiness of the Katakuris*, where a down and out family open up a remote B&B in picturesque hills straight out of *The Sound of Music*.

The first guest, a depressed middle-aged man, does indeed top himself (with a sharpened room key to the neck, no less), but the similarities end there. After opening with an outlandish claymation sequence, where a pixie-like creature tears out a girl's heart-shaped uvula, beginning a mesmerising sequence of birth and rebirth, we're introduced to the family and their woes.

Grandpa Masao (Kenji Sawada) worked as a shoe seller at a department store until he was let go and, hearing rumours of a new road being built in a remote mountain region, bought a guest house with his redundancy pay. Grandma Terue (Keiko Matsuzaka) is largely responsible for keeping everyone together through their financial and familial hardship. Mother Shizue (Naomi Nishida), an unlucky romantic who perpetually falls for the wrong guy, is left with a young daughter after her lover absconds with a high school girl. She's always quarrelling with her brother Masayuki (Shinji Takeda), who lost his job at a security firm after some unnamed criminal activity. Then there's mischievous great grandfather Jinpei (Tetsurô Tanba) and Shizue's daughter Yurie (Tamaki Miyazaki) who narrates the film. And it's easy to see the film from a child's point of view; the playful narrative structure, the song and dance pieces to deal with grief, the ambiguity of death.

Even the gore is kept comic and minimal. Miike's twisted sense of humour soon starts to unfurl, after the family find the corpse of their first guest. They break into song, the room taking on the green schlocky lighting of *The Rocky Horror Picture Show*, with a glorious synth pop 'n' roll melody. The songs themselves are endearing and funny; tongue is firmly in cheek, of course, but they're earnest and tenderly shot. Interestingly, the lyrics were originally intended as dialogue, which composers Kôji Endô and Kôji Makaino then set to music. And it works beautifully, giving the film that hyperreal quality of musicals.

The next guests, a famous sumo wrestler and his idol-like girlfriend, end up bonking to death, him having a heart attack and asphyxiating her underneath. Disposing of a sumo-sized body isn't easy. But after he and his young lover are laid to rest, a poor and desperately sad family show up looking for lodgings. These guests make for some of the most awkward moments, and end up nothing more than a fleeting red herring, having little impact on the unpredictable scenes that follow.

Amidst these strange stories, disparate subplots weave together, including one where conman Richâdo Sagawa (Kiyoshirô Imawano; a real life rock star thought of as the Japanese Elvis, who

sadly passed away in 2009), allegedly based on a real person, claims to be both in the US Navy as well as a member of the British Royal Family. Hearing him reminisce how he could have saved Princess Diana is monstrously funny. He seduces Shizue with a lavish dance number, 'The Feeling of Love', beautifully choreographed by Ryohei Kondo, which simultaneously embraces musical pieces and tears them a new one. Shizue is left rolling around on the floor in some kind of ecstatic daze, while Richard stands over her bemused. He finds his way to the B&B, ingests contaminated pond water that leads to some dubious scatological gags, and continues courting Shizue. But it's the fact he pilfered an ashtray that winds up great grandpa, and the two tumble off a cliff in the second claymation sequence. Glimpses of the real actors' faces flash up onto the animated bodies in horrifyingly hilarious scenes. The claymation is very reminiscent of Jan Švankmajer's work on *Alice* and *Conspirators of Pleasure*, and it makes for strikingly odd and hallucinogenic sequences, but also offers a cunning way around budgetary limitations, keeping things in the constraints of its $1,500,000 budget.

It isn't long before the police turn up, but they're looking for a man who has recently killed his girlfriend, and is now stowed away in the Katakuris' B&B. Desperate to escape, the killer takes Terue hostage. In an unexpectedly poignant scene, he is talked down by Masao, who pleads for his wife's life in exchange for his own. But it is fleeting, and the murderer lashes out only to be tackled by Masayuki. If that wasn't enough excitement, the volcano in the background blows. In the film's last stop-motion sequence, the lava flow surrounds the B&B, and following a mirror image of 'The Hills Are Alive', the family are left with an even more beautiful view. It's a scene that could so easily have been syrupy, but Miike somehow manages to move the viewer, even if he is poking fun all the while.

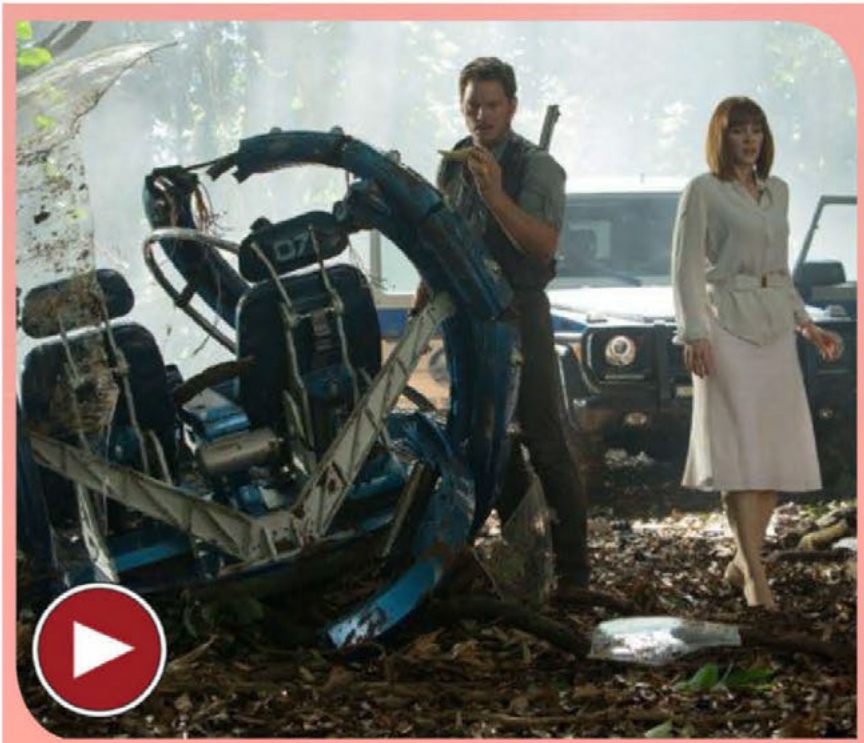
The film balances cuteness with the grotesque, culminating in scenes that are outrageously funny, saccharine, and morbid. The zenith is the scene where the recently-departed rise up from their shallow graves, bathed in green light, and break into a well-choreographed dance number. It's a sequence that gives John Landis' *Thriller* a run for its money. It's a playful film, not just with style, but with the social and economic commentary that can be gleaned from the narrative. Indeed, it makes reference to the crash of the Japanese economy in the nineties. But it offers a more joyous and celebratory affair than many of his bleaker films, giving an insight into a sense of humour lacking from most of his work. Challenging viewer expectations of linear narrative, the viewer could cut up and rearrange the film in a Dadaist re-telling of Miike's intention and still take plenty from it.

Miike has said his film is a parody of the source material, but by extension it winds up the entire musical genre. It's a satire of *The Sound of Music* most obviously, but the tunes run deeper than that, sending up the clear cut tropes of mainstream American cinema. The family, while ostensibly Japanese, live a very much westernised life, gathered around gawping at the TV at dinner. Miike's films are notoriously confrontational, and *The Happiness of the Katakuris* is no different; a subversive and surreal horror in the guise of a family drama and circumstantial comedy, with karaoke sing-alongs and all. *The Happiness of the Katakuris* was one of seven films Miike released in 2001 (including the dizzyingly violent *Ichi the Killer*), but it remains the finest of that or any year of his career; a striking, playful and wonderfully inventive film.

THE HAPPINESS OF THE KATAKURIS is released on Blu-ray on June 22nd. Read a full review of the disc on page 89.

REVIEWS

THE LATEST BIG SCREEN GENRE RELEASES REVIEWED AND RATED



JURASSIC WORLD

CERT:12A / DIRECTOR: COLIN TREVORROW / SCREENPLAY: RICK JAFFA, AMANDA SILVER, COLIN TREVORROW, DEREK CONNOLLY / STARRING: CHRIS PRATT, BRYCE DALLAS HOWARD, IRRFAN KHAN, VINCENT D ONOFRIO, TY SIMPKINS, NICK ROBINSON / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It's been 22 years since the first Jurassic Park film was released, and in-universe it's been 22 years since the original park opened with such tragic results. It's also been 10 years however since the new park, Jurassic World, successfully opened to the public; it has been operating ever since without (major) incident. Three story threads guide visitors around this new park; that of Zach (Robinson) and Gray (Simpkins) Mitchell, two kids visiting the park for the first time, the former bearing an uncanny resemblance to Goonies era Sean Astin, their aunt Claire (Dallas Howard), who's in charge of operating the park and is supposed to be chaperoning their tour but is working instead, and ex-Navy animal expert Owen (Pratt) who's been trying to train a pack of Velociraptors to follow simple commands.

As these characters weave around each other, the realities of the park come to light. The older brother Zack is bored by most of the attractions, more interested in the girls visiting the park. Gray keeps missing out on the action due to the crowds and his lack of height. Pratt's four raptors aren't quite as domesticated as they may seem and in order to keep the public excited about the park and paying the entrance fee, the gene-splicers down at the lab have to come up with a new attraction every few years, with the emphasis for new dinos not on being more authentic, but on being more exciting, more terrifying and generally having more teeth. It's a strategy that has resulted in Indominus rex, a mishmash of dinosaur and other DNA, bred to be over 50 feet long and terrifying, but which may have some secrets hidden in amongst its genetic makeup. What isn't a secret is her intelligence and before long she escapes and starts heading towards the main body of the park, the tourist sections, neatly outsmarting her pursuers at almost every step of the way.

In their efforts to stop Rex and find the boys, Claire and Owen have to deal with shady scientists taking dangerous shortcuts, InGen employees who want to weaponise the raptors for military use and see Rex's escape as the perfect trial run, interference from the well-meaning new owner of the park, Masrani (Khan), and the usual shenanigans where everyone in power ignores the suggestions of the one or two people who know exactly how to handle the situation, until a high enough body count has been reached.

DNA from the first film can be found throughout in respectful nods, with a 'gyrosphere' sequence nicely harking back to the T-rex attack in the first film, Mr DNA popping up for a moment along with a Dilophosaurus, and some characters even visiting the 'old' park's abandoned visitor's centre with plenty of ephemera from the first film still there.

Pratt continues his run of bringing his likeable charm to the action genre (essentially playing Burt Macklin straight), and has some decent chemistry with Howard despite the numerous, groan-worthy double entendres she's forced to deliver. Despite her character's initially softer nature, Howard does get to handle one of the more badass action sequences that once again respectfully references the first instalment of the franchise while putting a new spin on it. D'Onofrio provides a more one-note comic-style villain than he did in Daredevil, but works as the darker face of InGen, the company that own and operate the park.

The awe inspired by that first sight of dinosaurs 22 years ago can never be cloned, and in fact some of the dinos here look slightly worse than their 20-year-old brethren, especially when it comes to the puppets used for close-ups on some of the herbivores. Thankfully, the raptors and Indominus rex fare much better, although after being teased for much of the opening half of the film, Indominus rex isn't quite as immediately visually arresting as the T-rex was in its first appearance, but the savagery of her attacks more than makes up for it.

Some slightly goofy scenes in the climax featuring shared 'moments' between a T-rex and a raptor, between Pratt and one of the dinos, and between Pratt and Howard, don't quite manage to mar a solid summer action film that drops plenty of loving references to the previous films, while going in a new direction and putting in place new elements for future sequels, just as the original did with that lost can of shaving foam. On top of all this, the kids aren't annoying!

Definitely worth the price of admission.

IAIN MCNALLY

EXPECTED 8

ACTUAL 8

INSIDIOUS: CHAPTER 3

CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: LEIGH WHANNELL / STARRING: DERMOT MULRONEY, STEFANIE SCOTT, LIN SHAYE, L WHANNELL / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Tasked with creating a third Insidious film around a fairly one-beat idea - demonic spirits from an astral plane known as The Further sometimes hitch a ride back into the world of the living - franchise creator Leigh Whannell (who directs this third instalment in addition to reprising his role as bumbling ghost-hunter Specs) has done his best to avoid just remaking the first two films but with a new cast. The story of the Lamberts (Patrick Wilson and Rose Byrne) in the first two films is done and dusted so, realising that the series' most bankable assets are feisty demon hunter Elise Rainier (the always-watchable Shaye) and Specs and his cupcake-munching partner Tucker (Angus Sampson), Whannell has crafted a prequel to the earlier movies; this allows us to spend more time with Elise (killed off in the first film, brought back as a ghost in the second) and to establish her previous relationship with the world of the undead and her first meeting with Specs and Tucker, which leads to the unlikely partnership depicted in the original Insidious.

The film's A-story is familiar enough; troubled teen Quinn (Scott) is determined to make contact with her recently-deceased Mom Lillith, but Elise's reluctant attempt to speak to her from beyond the grave releases something nasty and bad-tempered, which is going to make life difficult for Quinn, especially when she's housebound and virtually bedbound following a traffic accident.

It'd be all too easy to write Insidious 3 off as Insipid 3 because, in truth, this is fairly generic, predictable stuff. The scares aren't really scary - we get the usual bumping and thumping, grasping hands, hideous faces looming out of the darkness, shuffling figures leaving oily footprints on the carpet - there's nothing here we've not seen in a zillion horrors aimed at those of a nervous disposition. But Whannell, conscious of his audience, handles the inevitable story beats with precision, and the film perks up when Shaye is on screen and even the goofy ghostbusters aren't quite as irritating as they've been in the past (or, chronologically, the future). Of course, our foreknowledge means the stakes are never very high whenever any of the three are in jeopardy, because we know where their story is going (and, indeed, where Shaye's ends) but the final battle with the grisly Breathing Man still manages to ratchet up a bit of tension where the rest of the film has been spent largely going through the motions.

The cinematic circle is squared as Elise, Tucker and Specs walk off into the sunshine (which is a relief after ninety-odd minutes spent in gloomy interiors) with a new business enterprise brewing and a final 'jump-scare' which seems to lead directly into the first movie. It's a decent and effective ending to a horror-lite franchise which really has run its course now and ought to be laid to rest. But we suspect that, like its otherworldly demons, Insidious will find its way back in a year or two...

PAUL MOUNT

EXPECTED 5

ACTUAL 5

MAGGIE

CERT: TBC / DIRECTOR: HENRY HOBSON / SCREENPLAY: JOHN SCOTT 3 / STARRING: ARNOLD SCHWARZENEGGER, ABIGAIL BRESLIN, JOELY RICHARDSON / RELEASE DATE: JULY 17TH

If zombie movies had been as ubiquitous in the 1980s and '90s as they are today, Arnold "The Governator" Schwarzenegger would have been right in the middle of the zombocalypse, machine-gunning his way through the undead horde and deadpanning "They won't be back!" before leaping through a window to wrestle with a helicopter. But times have changed and it might appear (his forthcoming return to the Terminator franchise notwithstanding) that Arnie, now a spritely and still-formidable sixty-seven years old, is coming to terms with the ageing process and beginning to make films more befitting a man of his advancing years. But there's still that little matter of the zombie movie...

Maggie is magnificent - but in ways we might never have expected from a film toplined by the former Governor of California. This is a quiet, contemplative, deeply unshowy movie which is as much - if not more - about mortality and coming to terms with life and inevitable death - as it is about nasty growling monsters. There's been an outbreak of a "necromabulist" virus which turns the infected into drooling flesh-eaters. The outbreak is under control but it's been a long, hard battle and mankind has taken a real hit. Normality is slowly being restored and farmer Wade Vogel (Arnie) has spent two weeks searching through the chaos to find his missing daughter Maggie (Abigail Breslin). She's been bitten and has begun the slow transformation process. But instead of allowing her to be shunted off into a quarantine centre where the infected are apparently humanely disposed of, Wade takes Maggie home so she can spend her last few weeks with her family. Wade and his wife (Maggie's stepmother) Caroline (Joely Richardson) try to maintain a veneer of normality as Maggie slowly falls apart, both physically and psychologically...

Maggie is a glowering, brooding movie, an art house 'zombie' film largely drained of colour and with a deep background soundtrack of distant rumbling thunder, underscoring its dour, downbeat storyline and the dreadful inevitability of its climax. Performances are dialled right back (handily for Arnie); Abigail Breslin (no stranger to the undead courtesy of Zombieland back in 2009) is superb as Maggie, the Daddy's Girl at once resigned to and yet terrified of her fate. Her relationships with her family and friends have become awkward and fumbling and her attempts to find her temporary place in a changed world are frustrated by the horror of her situation; at one point Maggie wakes in the night to find maggots squirming in the rotting flesh of her decomposing arm. She sees her own potential future too when her once would-be boyfriend Trent, also suffering from the virus, is dragged screaming from his home by the police when his own condition reaches the point of no return. Arnie's on surprisingly good form too. There are no Oscars waiting in the wings, obviously, but for once the paucity of dialogue serves him well. He deftly portrays the torment of a man who just wants to do his best for his daughter and who can't change the fate that lays in store for her however hard he tries or however much he chooses to ignore it. It's a subtle, nuanced performance and demonstrates what Arnie might have been capable of if he hadn't embraced his action man persona so completely back in his glory years.

Maggie is a tough, difficult film to watch because of the horrible inevitability of what we know is going to happen. Viewers recently touched by bereavement and the sense of hopelessness and despair it can engender - especially as it approaches - may find it all too much to bear. But those who persevere will be richly rewarded by perhaps the bleakest 'genre' movie since The Mist, a film which, however hard it might be to experience and endure, is one which they're not likely to forget in a hurry. Quite possibly a little masterpiece.

PAUL MOUNT

EXPECTED 6

ACTUAL 9

TOMORROWLAND

CERT: 12A / DIRECTOR: BRAD BIRD / SCREENPLAY: DAMON LINDELOF, BRAD BIRD, JEFF JENSEN / STARRING: BRITT ROBERTSON, GEORGE CLOONEY, KATHRYN HAHN, HUGH LAURIE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Imagine a world where the brightest, most brilliant minds of our time could invent and create freely, separate from petty bureaucracy, rules and laws and the ambitions of petty businessmen and politicians? That place is Tomorrowland.

It's a nice, if naïve, concept that forms the backbone of Brad Bird's latest film. With a plot allegedly inspired by a banker's box full of retro Disney memorabilia labelled "1952" and a mystery-shrouded production, all that's been shown so far are clips of a mysterious "Tomorrowland" pin that shows visions of a retro sci-fi future to the girl who finds it, Casey (Britt Robertson), and an extended scene of Casey meeting up with paranoid inventor Frank Walker (George Clooney) and the two of them being pursued by weird humanoid robots.

So what's it all about? Needless to say the central mystery won't be spoiled here, but the film starts by introducing Clooney's Walker as a young inventor who has a run in with a girl from "The Future" and "Tomorrowland" itself but then shifts gears to the present day, introducing Casey's attempts to resist the sense of powerlessness heaped upon her by her teachers, who teach climate change and oil scarcity, but don't seem interested in empowering their students to start thinking about how to address these issues. Casey plans to sabotage the planned demolition of the NASA launch pad near her house, where her father used to work. After getting caught and spending time in jail, that distinctive "T" pin falls into her lap, providing her with fantastic visions of a world where people travel via jetpacks, flying cars fill the air, robots build beautiful buildings in the blink of an eye, and off-world travel is real and in a manageable timescale. There is no question that they are visions, as Casey remains firmly rooted in the here and now during their appearance, often to comedic effect, banging her head on objects in the real world that are invisible to her in "Tomorrowland". Before long she heads off to find out more about the pin and the place it purports to be from, running in to a cute yet familiar little girl, some evil robots and eventually Frank, before trying to break back into the world of Tomorrowland itself.

With all the hype and mystery around the film, marketing it was always going to be difficult and something that seems to have gotten lost in the mix is that this is mostly a kids' action movie along the lines of '80s movies like Explorers or The Goonies. The big reveal when it comes is a little bit of a let-down and is followed by a slightly disappointing climax.

Casey, however, is a great mix of confidence, street smarts and scientific know-how that will hopefully inspire a generation of young girls (and boys) that STEM subjects (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) are cool, interesting and worth their time, but unfortunately there's not an awful lot for adults apart from watching Clooney playing his hand at a more comedic role and squaring up verbally to stuffed shirt Hugh Laurie near the film's climax.

Once Laurie does turn up, the film takes a surprising, dark, pessimistic turn, with a pretty scary ecological message lamenting the loss of that gleaming, sci-fi future from the '50s and '60s for the pessimistic attitude that pervades culture these days. The eventual reveal of what Tomorrowland is now, as opposed to what it was, is also somewhat of a letdown. Thankfully, a glimmer of optimism does return but it's a surprisingly bold move for a film that's mostly been a roller coaster so far.

Kids and teens should have a riot with the goofy robots, a neat small role by Key and Peele's Keegan-Michael Key and the fun action, but adults expecting more will probably be slightly disappointed. Bring a young relative and revel in their wonder.

IAIN MCNALLY

EXPECTED 9

ACTUAL 7

MAD MAX: FURY ROAD

CERT:15 / DIRECTOR: GEORGE MILLER / SCREENPLAY: GEORGE MILLER, BRENDAN MCCARTHY, NICK LATHOURIS / STARRING: TOM HARDY, CHARLIZE THERON, NICHOLAS HOULT, HUGH KEAYS-BYRNE, ROSIE HUNTINGTON-WHITELEY/ RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The title card may read Mad Max but Fury Road belongs to Charlize Theron's Imperator Furiosa. George Miller has decided not to dwell too much on Max Rockatansky in his return to the silver screen; after all, he has been the star of three self-titled films and, perhaps wisely, Miller instead focuses more on the crazy characters and insane wasteland that surrounds Max. The film does begin with Max, alone and broken once again, haunted by the memories of those whose lives he's tried and failed to save in the past. He's devolved almost entirely into a creature focused on survival alone. Captured by a roaming gang of hunters, he's taken to their home citadel and, thanks to his handy "universal donor" blood type, he's designated a "living blood bank" to the irradiated War Boys of water despot Immortan Joe.

It's not long before run-down War Boy Nux (Hoult) literally drags Max and his "high octane crazy blood", via the IV connecting the two, on a search for Theron's bad-ass Imperator, formerly in Immortan Joe's employ, now on the run in Joe's loaded for bear "War-Rig" for unknown reasons.

Then... the chase begins... and well, it doesn't really end. Miller has taken the tanker escape section from 1981's Mad Max 2 (The Road Warrior), the train chase from 1985's Mad Max: Beyond Thunderdome and smashed them together in a brutal mix of metal and flesh, stretching the resultant paste into an entire film. The War-Rig rarely stops rolling for more than a few minutes, relentlessly pursued by Immortan Joe's crew and new bunches of post-apocalyptic nutters every few miles, from places like The Gun Farm or Gas Town. Miller takes us on a demented tour of his cursed earth, very lightly sketching out how all these people survive, their politics and economy, using just the characters' names and their tribes' backgrounds, looks and distinctive speech. The pace is broken up at times by pit stops, but this is essentially one big long chase movie, which some may find wearing.

The battles are fantastic, with new methods of attacking/boarding/defending a big rig being attempted every few minutes, with losses and victories on both sides along the way. As usual the vehicles look fantastically demented (as do their occupants), and some of the dodgier looking CG elements from the trailers look a lot more polished here. There does seem to be a weird habit at times of speeding up the footage slightly, perhaps a choice emphasising the madness of Max and his world.The chases are lent a new air of bloody reality with CG bodies being thrown or falling from moving vehicles, still wriggling and scrabbling for life rather than the crash test dummies of previous films.

Tom Hardy grunts and mumbles his way through the first half of the film, having apparently been left alone with his ghosts in the wilds for too long. Theron on the other hand carries the film, purposeful, sympathetic without appearing weak, and she carries the emotion of the whole enterprise (along with her "charges"). Max is mostly one note, utterly focused on getting away, not daring to hope. Reintroducing the character through the eyes of others may turn out to be a good choice, and hopefully Hardy will have much more to do in the upcoming Mad Max: The Wasteland and its three rumoured sequels. Maybe the original Max, Mel Gibson, could also turn up in a cameo there, because he certainly doesn't here.

Max himself and some of the villains may be thinly sketched, but Fury Road is definitely worth the cost of gasoline to go and see.

IAIN MCNALLY

EXPECTED 9

ACTUAL 8

THE WORLD'S FIRST BATTLE-RAP MUSICAL

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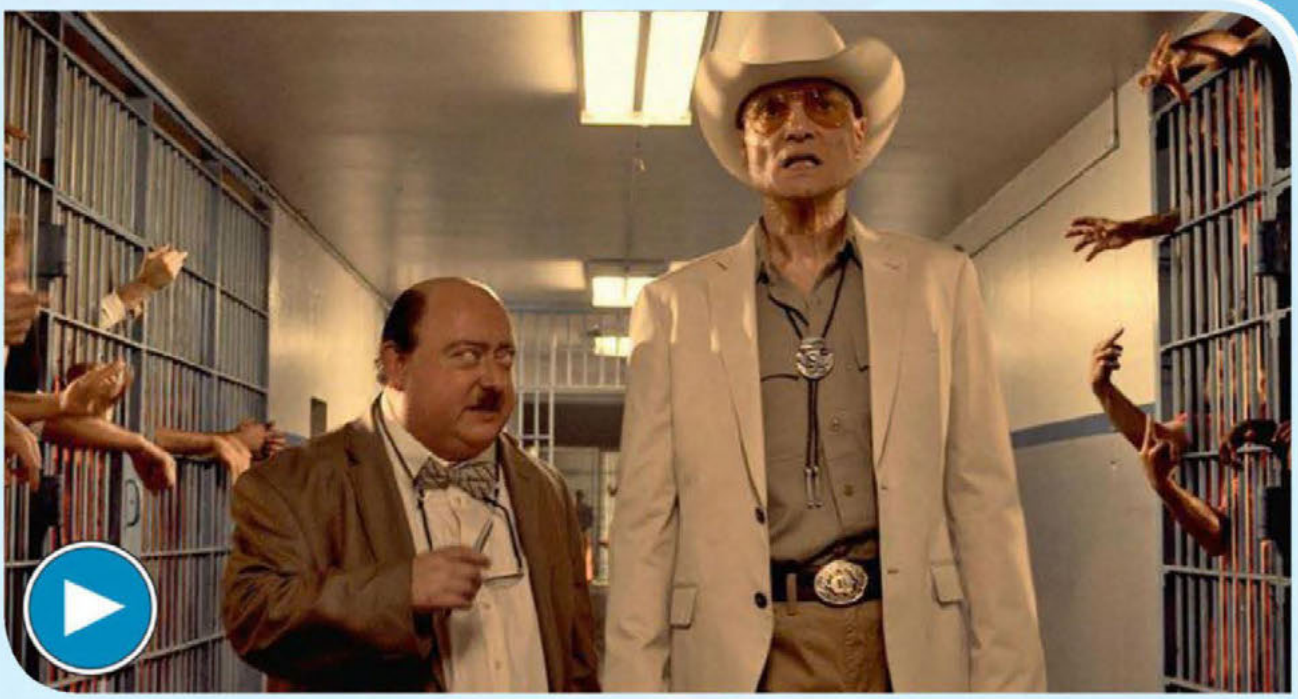


THE HUMAN CENTIPEDE III (FINAL SEQUENCE)

DVD + BD + VOD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: TOM SIX / STARRING: DIETER LASER, LAURENCE R. HARVEY, BREE OLSON, ERIC ROBERTS / RELEASE DATE: JULY 13TH

Following up the earthshakingly shocking 2009 First Sequence with the 'meta' Full Sequence (2011) was a brave and surprising thing to do. However, with the Final Sequence in The Human Centipede world, creator Tom Six has warped cinematic reality even further by acknowledging that the first two films are, indeed, fiction and real movies, and even appear onscreen himself.

This instalment takes place in an American prison, where the inmates are running riot and the head honcho, Bill Boss (Laser) would be pulling his hair out if he had any. His tough measures are certainly not working, but that doesn't stop his sadistic tendencies and demand for respect. After an ultimatum from the local Governor (Roberts), right-hand man and (kind of) rational accountant Dwight Butler (Harvey) comes up with an idea: bind the prisoners together to form a 500-man human centipede, just like the one he's seen in the movies. Boss isn't won over at first, lambasting him and his suggestion, "You look precisely like this retard pervert" he yells.

Butler even invites director Tom Six (himself) to give his approval of the scheme. With a surgeon who's only practicing there as he's struck off and Boss becoming increasingly unhinged and volatile, a plan is put in place to make the world's first Prison Human Centipede!

What might come as a surprise to most is that this third film is actually quite restrained when it comes to the gore and shocking visuals. That's not to say there's not plenty here to turn stomachs; believe us, Six is still not pulling his punches! But most of the upsetting things are in the dialogue and actions of the wonderfully over-the-top Bill Boss. Laser appears to be having the time of his life; gurning, tongue-flicking, screaming obscenities and racial abuse while being an absolute bastard to the inmates and his secretary, the sole female character (played by Olson). While her treatment is reprehensible (and incredibly disturbing), one would have expected it to be a hell of a lot worse, particularly when the film purported to be the most offensive film yet. It's made very clear that Boss, like all bullies, is actually a massive coward who uses his aggression to compensate. Only the stupidest viewer would side with this insane despot.

The film will offend, though, and is certainly not for many tastes. Even fans of the original two may struggle; but stick with it, as there's a lot of spot-on satire and warped, black humour to be found. Six has managed, once again, to give his critics the fuel they desire to hate him, but by playing against expectations, he's delivered a funny, sickening and surprising conclusion to his trilogy that has split opinion from day one.

Disturbing in his portrayal of Doctor Heiter, here Dieter Laser is beyond terrifying as the psychopathic Boss. And Laurence Harvey, who as Martin was silent and deadly, shows his true talent for comedy and pathos as the put-upon Butler, his Oliver Hardy appearance playing perfectly against Boss' perverse Kurtz, even if his Southern drawl shows signs of Southern Wigan at times.

If Full Sequence was Six deconstructing his audience, Final Sequence is a deconstruction of the rest of the world. From the US (and no doubt elsewhere) penal system (by way of Guantanamo Bay) to human rights, to the ludicrous pressures of budgets. It's not the Centipede you were expecting but it's definitely one that has legs.

MARTIN UNSWORTH

++++++++++ 8

THE LOFT

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: ERIC VAN LOOY / SCREENPLAY: BART DE PAUW, WESLEY STRICK / STARRING: KARL URBAN, JAMES MARSDEN, WENTWORTH MILLER, ERIC STONESTREET, MATTHIAS SCHOENAERTS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Secrets, lies and deceit: those are the ingredients for The Loft, an American remake of the Belgium film Loft, both directed by Eric Van Looy. It's safe to say that once you've watched one of them, you've watched both of them. When watching the trailer for this film, you would think 'cool, vengeful murder mystery with a great male cast', but sadly... well, let's just say the trailer is as deceptive as its characters.

Family life and work can be so stressful sometimes that men just need a home away from home, apparently, or to just get away from their wives, maybe have an affair or two. So that is what Vincent (Urban), Luke (Miller), Chris (Marsden), Marty (Stonestreet) and Philip (Schoenaerts) do, all of whom are married men. Each have a key to a secret apartment (the loft) allowing them to bring back other women, fulfil their sexual desires and cheat on their wives. Operation Adultery seems to be working just fine, except one day Luke enters the loft to find a woman's dead body lying on the bed in her own blood. There are only five men and five keys, meaning conspiracies ensue.

It's a whodunit, only the film wants us to know who it is (or at least think who it is) throughout the whole film causing us to lose the whole thrill of figuring it out. Unlike a mystery where hints and clues have been strategically placed for us to discover and work out the mystery for ourselves, The Loft constantly feeds us incorrect information only to reveal that everything we have watched is utterly irrelevant to the actual mystery, which has a completely different yet ridiculous outcome. Yes, you don't see the end twist coming, but there is absolutely no reason you should see it coming. It might as well have revealed that it was a ghost; that would have been just as plausible as the actual ending.

Five wealthy, good-looking but cheating men are of course going to be obnoxious and loathsome, but what is most troubling is that their actions have slight justification by the representation of their spouses. Luke's wife Ellie is just one example. Ellie relies on Luke to help her take her insulin shots, she therefore 'can't live' without him and claims she would tolerate him cheating on her. Ironically, Luke is the only key holder that doesn't actually cheat. The weakness and lack of motivation in the female characters make the wives just as unlikeable as their husbands. And their husbands are despicable.

As the guys attempt to figure out this disturbing scenario, the film flicks to the not so distant past and future; the lead up to the murder and the guys being interrogated by the police - a narrative that hasn't been cleverly devised. The film shows too much between these transitions, and the screenwriters have obviously had to elongate the story so they attempt to deceive the audience from knowing where the actual plot is going. They leave the twists until the very end, but there is no good build-up of emotions, no thrill factor to keep us interested until the big reveal at the end. Even then the reveal seems like a cop-out. The end simply does not justify the means, leaving its audience deeply unsatisfied and deceived.

SAMANTHA WARD

++++++++++ 2

GIRLS AGAINST BOYS

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: AUSTIN CHICK / STARRING: DANIELLE PANABAKER, NICOLE LALIBERTE, ANDREW HOWARD / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The opening flash-forward of Girls Against Boys tells you everything you think you need to know: the striking, stick-thin redhead Lu is seducing a police officer in a hotel bedroom, and once he's handcuffed and blindfolded, she cocks his gun and suddenly his mood deflates dramatically.

But this pre-title sequence is as much of a deception as the one practised in Lu's entrapment, for Girls Against Boys is less concerned with the graphic nature of its premise than it is by the emotional consequences. There's sexual violence and violent death aplenty, but mostly performed off-screen or in medium and long-shot; or in the case of the rape that precipitates the killing spree that is the film's selling point, out of focus on the very edge of the frame.

Shae (Panabaker) is having a bad day. Forgoing a party with friends in order to spend the weekend in the Hamptons, with the older boyfriend she then discovers is leaving her to go back to his wife, Shae returns to the bar where she works, hooking up with Lu (LaLiberte), a co-worker who it is immediately apparent is a halfpenny short of a shilling. After an entire night of carousing in the company of three lads they meet at the club, Shae eventually arrives home as day is breaking and in spite of spurning his advances, is sexually assaulted by Simon (Michael Stahl-David). The second half of the film is concerned with the aftermath and Shae's revenge.

Despite sharing a general premise with other such films as Baise Moi and I Spit on Your Grave, the direction Austin Chick's film takes couldn't be more different. Eschewing explanations in favour of moral ambiguity (there can't be more than thirty pages of dialogue in the entire screenplay), it is up to the viewer to decode the meaning and import in the clues that follow. And while Lu is the one who takes the initiative, Shae is entirely complicit to her conduct, and her reaction to the first death is telling. There is in the final act a comeuppance for one of the two girls, but for the other it appears the cycle will begin again, an avenue for redemption and a potential happy ending having just been closed down.

Fluidly directed with crisp camerawork and icy cool performances over a shimmering electronic soundtrack, Girls Against Boys is visually sharp but psychologically indistinct, and clearly has ambitions towards a deeper philosophical import. Yet although the film borders on being a cautionary tale about the dangers of taking empowerment too far, the conclusion it arrives at is considerably more equivocal. As a result, Girls Against Boys is an enigmatic and not entirely fulfilling experience.

Extras: *Making of documentary*

J. R. SOUTHALL

++++++++++ 6

THE HOUND OF THE BASKERVILLES (1959)

BD / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: TERENCE FISHER / SCREENPLAY: PETER BRYAN / STARRING: PETER CUSHING, CHRISTOPHER LEE, ANDRÉ MORELL, MARLA LANDI, EWEN SOLON, FRANCIS DE WOLFF / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

As you're probably aware, Hammer didn't just do horror. Even in the late '50s when Hammer Horror was a new and lucrative success for them, they were still looking elsewhere for source material. So when Kenneth Hyman got them the rights to Sherlock Holmes' most famous adventure, they didn't hesitate to give it the Hammer Horror treatment. What was that? Didn't we just mean the "Hammer treatment"? Well no, not really. Hammer knew what they'd suddenly become quite good at so if the story featured a demonic hound then that was good enough for them. It was time to break open the Kensington Gore once more and re-use the set from Dracula (1958).

To be honest, we exaggerate a bit. A proper Hammer Horror deliberately attracted an X-certificate and wore it like a badge of honour. The Hound of the Baskervilles went for a more modest A-certificate but it was hardly family-friendly for the time. The BBFC must have been in fairly lenient mood that day. Nevertheless, they cast their two big horror stars in the lead roles: Peter Cushing as Holmes and Big Chris brilliantly subverting expectation as Sir Henry Baskerville himself. Lee had only recently become a star and was just known for monsters and villains. Here he's cleverly set up as a rotter only to be revealed as a thoroughly decent chap and the romantic lead. There's blood, sacrifices, mutilations and even that ever-present Hammer Horror trope: class warfare [*Really? – Ed*]. Yes, really. Hammer knew what their target audience wanted. There's also a tarantula and that hound. We'll come to him in a moment.

You know the plot so we won't go over it again - however, you'll not be surprised to learn that Hammer took some liberties with the source material. But it's still good solid stuff and Holmes-aficionado Cushing seems to be having a ball with his usual attention to detail. A fine Holmes and a role he'd reprise on the telly. André Morell's Watson is also commendable for shedding the comedy traits Nigel Bruce had so firmly embedded in the public consciousness all those years earlier. But what makes this such a great Holmes-outing is the terrific atmosphere. It's the first colour adventure for the detective and the lurid Hammer-look just really suits it. Baskerville Hall and the moors have never looked better and we've got to point out the Blu-ray transfer here. This reviewer hasn't been entirely satisfied with the HD Hammer discs so far - the lighting and colours often just look "wrong" - but they seem to have finally nailed it with this one.

Any flaws? Well there isn't really enough foggy London for Sherlock Holmes (wrong story we suppose) and then there's the titular Hound. At the climax we get a docile looking dog in a mask. It's rubbish. But at least it raises a smile and that's what Hammer has come to be all about.

Extras: *Audio commentary / Three documentaries / Trailer / Booklet*

JOHN KNOTT

9

THE DEAD LANDS

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: TOA FRASER / SCREENPLAY: GLENN STANDRING / STARRING: JAMES ROLLESTON, LAWRENCE MAKOARE, TE KOHE TUHAKA, XAVIER HORAN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

When his family and tribe are slaughtered by the power hungry Wirepa (Tuhaka) following an act of desecration blamed on him, Hongi (Rolleston) sets out to prove his worth and exact revenge. Desperate to honour his slain chieftain father, he pursues the attackers into the feared Dead Lands, home to the spirits of a lost tribe and haunted by a legendary monster.

History and tradition are very much to the fore of Toa Fraser's horror-inflected thriller. Claiming to be the first film to feature a cast taken entirely from New Zealand's Māori people and set wholly in their language, The Dead Lands draws on the overly familiar story of boy seeking revenge while hooking up with a father substitute who teaches him how. There are some touching moments between Hongi and the 'monster' (Makoare – memorable as Bolg in The Hobbit films), a warrior who is the last of his people and with his own demons to satisfy, and you do get a real sense of both the respect and conflict in their relationship. The fight scenes are brutal and unflinching, with the Māori's traditional martial art of Mau rākau being theatrically used as inspiration, (a skill Hongi seems to learn overnight), and the blood flows freely enough to satisfy gore fans. So why is The Dead Lands just a bit dull?

Much of the blame perhaps unfairly rests at the Hobbit-y feet of Peter Jackson. It is nearly 15 years since Jackson first began his epic telling of Middle-earth, and yet The Dead Lands feels like a film from before that time. New Zealand somehow doesn't look as mesmerisingly beautiful as you know it can, and the pursuit of Wirepa and his gang unintentionally stirs memories of Aragorn and friends hunting orcs. The fights are also slightly confusing in nature. The posturing and bravado of the ritualistic challenges of the warriors is fascinating; but when they get in close, it becomes increasingly difficult to ascertain exactly who is doing what to whom, with the camera spinning and swooping around the similarly-attired cast. There is also a curious interlude when Hongi and his now partially tame monster encounter a scouting party from another tribe, which includes a beautiful female warrior. While serving to add weight to the monster's malicious reputation, it comes across a little unnecessary, as if the film is trying too hard to make Makoare's character as unsympathetic as possible so any latter redemption is all the more powerful.

For all its flaws, The Dead Lands remains an interesting film. The mysticisms and traditions of the Māori people are handled with respectful honesty, allowing the viewer an insight into the harsh lives of a pre-colonial people, although there is over-emphasis on their cannibalistic nature (everyone seems to want to eat everyone else with some magic mushrooms on the side). With a reported budget that puts the film into the micro-category, Fraser and his crew must be applauded for what they have achieved. It's clear what they were striving for, hoping to bring the Māori culture to cinema in way not yet seen, but it falls a little short of having the impact of a film such as The Raid or Apocalypto, and the comparisons with Jackson's films are unavoidable and unhelpful.

Taking everything into account, The Dead Lands is perhaps as good a film as it could have been; after watching you'll just wish it was a bit better.

JOHN TOWNSEND

5

KINGDOM COME

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: GREG A. SAGER / SCREENPLAY: GREG A. SAGER, GEOFF HART, A. JAYE WILLIAMS / STARRING: RY BARRETT, CAMILLE HOLLETT-FRENCH, JASON MARTORINO, KATIE UHLMANN / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 29TH

When a group of unconnected strangers awaken in a dank room with no memory of how they got there, with nothing better to do they begin exploring the abandoned building they are seemingly trapped within. It soon transpires that each of them is hiding a terrible secret, and that they are being hunted by unseen forces lurking in the shadows.

If that doesn't fire off alarm bells of potential tedium, know that director Greg A. Sager was previously responsible for the tepid puddle of afterbirth that was The Devil In Me (aka Devil Seed), and here gives us what is essentially Saw II rehashed with supernatural overtones, but utterly devoid of the sense of engagingly gruesome mystery such a description would suggest. A generic cast make the best of what little they're given, but with underdeveloped characters and stilted dialogue punctuated by unimaginative profanity, they really don't have a lot to work with. A few of the roomful of stereotypes aren't entirely unlikable, inducing some glimmer of concern for their safety, so it really doesn't seem reasonable to expect them to pay for a single mistake by having disproportionate levels of horrific violence inflicted upon them. However, the flipside of this is the voyeuristic enjoyment derived from punishment being meted out to those who unequivocally deserve it; there is without a doubt a certain degree of satisfaction to be had in watching a serial rapist have his guts torn out or a paedophile being beaten to death with a spade.

In between intermittent scenes of substandard torture porn the paper thin story is gradually revealed, and turns out to be nothing you've not seen before and as such will have already predicted well ahead of the big reveal. Threadbare clichés run rampant with very little of any import actually taking place, and instead of coming off as equal parts moral ambiguity and visceral horror, the action provokes little more than boredom.

The lacklustre plotting is occasionally relieved by some genuinely creepy creature design and the third-act introduction of a scenery-chewing villain ties events together, but mere moments of inspired imagination doesn't make up for gormless characters monotonously stumbling around for over an hour and a half. While Sager has noticeably improved from his feature debut, that's really not saying much.

ANDREW MARSHALL

4

SOCIETY

BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: BRIAN YUZNA / SCREENPLAY: RICK FRY, WOODY KEITH / STARRING: BILLY WARLOCK, DEVIN DEVASQUEZ, EVAN RICHARDS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The subject of paranoia has been a plot point used in countless films, and is used again in Society to great effect.

Bill Whitney (Warlock) is a teenager that just doesn't feel like he fits in. He thinks he might be adopted and he just doesn't seem to understand the social requirements that his peers and the adult community around him embrace so easily. He has sessions with a shrink who tries to convince him otherwise, but to no avail.

When his sister, Jenny (Patrice Jennings), has her coming out party, Bill overhears a recording that sets alarm bells ringing as it appears that the party is merely an orgy. Disturbingly, his own parents might even have got involved. From here, the community at large look to cover up what Bill has discovered and are even happy to commit murder to do so. Anyone who tries to agree with Bill and offer him evidence to back up his concerns winds up dead.

It's only when Bill is rounded up for another party that the sickening truth comes out and he realises that you're not paranoid if they really are after you.

Now over twenty-five years old, it is clear that Yuzna successfully crafted a horror film out of the premise that the class system really does allow the stinking rich to prey on the poor or those from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Of course, with this being an '80s film, the execution of the idea is wonderfully over the top with what is probably the most memorable last thirty minutes in a horror film ever. As it came before the age of CGI, it's amazing to watch the creations of Screaming Mad George (go look him up kids – the guy was a genius) and his team in one of the most bizarre endings in cinematic history. Gross-out doesn't even cover it. It makes you realise how over-reliant we are on computer effects these days.

It took over three years for the film to be released in America as it was feared that they wouldn't understand it. With a rich transfer and limited to only 3000 copies, this is a must buy for fans of the era. Satire at its best.

Extras: *The Masters of the Hunt featurette / The Champion of the Shunt FX featurette / Brian Yuzna Q&A / In Conversation / Music Video / Collector's Booklet / Society: Party Animal – comic book sequel.*

J.D. GILLAM

7

TUSK

DVD + VOD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: KEVIN SMITH / STARRING: JUSTIN LONG, MICHAEL PARKS, GENESIS RODRIGUEZ, HALEY JOEL OSMENT, JOHNNY DEPP / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Having dipped his toes into the murky waters of horror with 2011's Red State, Kevin Smith returns with another dark and twisted tale known as Tusk, the first of his planned True North trilogy.

Plot-wise, Wallace Bryton (Long) is the co-host of an outlandish podcast known as The Not-See Party. Looking to exploit some of the more bizarre and unique folks dotted out there across the worldwide web, Wallace heads off to Canada to poke fun at his latest story, the Kill Bill Kid. Unfortunately, by the time he arrives to see this poor sap who's accidentally lopped off his own leg with a samurai sword, the wannabe Bride has offed himself. Having travelled all of that way for nothing, Wallace is in desperate need of a story in order to make his trip worthwhile. Step forward, Howard Howe (Parks).

Wallace happens across an advert placed by Mr. Howe, which offers somebody the chance to live with him in his expansive house, rent-free, and all the new tenant needs to do is act like a walrus for a set period of time each day. Intrigued, Wallace treks out to rural Manitoba to meet the wheelchair-bound Howe. As we learn of Howe's eerie, walrus-affected backstory, it's not long before it becomes clear that the creepy old sea dog is keen to turn Wallace into a walrus in order to bring him some companionship and let the good times roll. Or something like that. Elsewhere, Wallace's girlfriend Ally (Rodriguez) and podcast co-host Teddy (Osment) set out to find the missing walrus-in-waiting.

Safe to say, Tusk is just a little unique in its premise. It's not every day you come across a film which sees a crazed old man looking to bring back the good times by turning an unsuspecting enquirer into a doting, fish-eating walrus named Mr. Tusk. Odd, yes, but the film certainly works well on a multitude of levels. As well as a truly sinister edge at times, the film is also laced with the snappy dialogue so often associated with Smith, and there's even a few choice and impressive monologues for the always-stunning Michael Parks. It goes without saying that Parks is great… but Parks is great. Better than great. But if you've ever seen a Michael Parks movie, you'll already be aware of this. Here the veteran actor plays an unhinged, erratic loner who essentially is longing to relive a particularly fond memory, yet is one creepy-ass bastard in doing so.

Away from Parks, Justin Long is also on fine form here, delivering a nobody who is suddenly a somebody thanks to exploitative podcasting, and he is equally a scumbag as well as managing to be remarkably engaging and watchable. More surprising is how charismatic Haley Joel Osment comes across during the time he's on screen, with many maybe having not seen the now-27-year-old actor since the likes of A.I. and The Sixth Sense. The chemistry between both he and Long and he and Genesis Rodriguez works well, although in varying ways. And then there's Johnny Depp, popping up near the end of the second act and threatening to steal the film as his oddball detective, Guy Lapointe, devours scenery like a shark chowing through Amity Island tourists.

When all is said and done, Tusk is a worthy follow-up to the fascinating Red State (another Smith and Parks vehicle), and Kevin Smith delivers a deeply disturbing movie that throws up plenty of questions about monsters and humanity yet still manages to give audiences enough of the Smith humour, charm and charisma that they'll be familiar with by this stage of the game.

Completing the release, there's one of Smith's always-informative and entertaining commentaries, along with a couple of nice deleted scenes and the brilliant animated version of the whole Tusk concept coming together on Smith's SModcast. Whilst some may find it a little too odd, there's plenty in Tusk that will appeal to a wide variety of audiences. Walrus, yes? Unequivocally.

ANDREW POLLARD

8

PROJECT ALMANAC

DVD / CERT: 12 / DIRECTOR: DEAN ISRAELITE / SCREENPLAY: JASON PAGAN, ANDREW DEUTSCHMAN / STARRING: JONNY WESTON, SOFIA BLACK-D'ELIA, SAM LERNER, ALLEN EVANGELISTA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

David Raskin (Jonny Weston) has just been accepted into MIT, if he can find a further $20,000 to complete his registration. With no benefactor making themselves known, David has taken to rifling through his father's old files in the hope that he may have had an idea before he died in a car accident when David was still young.

Incredibly, David finds blueprints for a temporal relocation device (or time machine to you and us) and, with the help of his friends and sister, goes about building the damn thing. David even manages to get closer to his high school crush as a result (who says being a nerd is bad for your sex life?). The group agree on a set of rules to try and ensure that nothing goes wrong. Then they win the lottery and go to a music festival, enjoying themselves as much as they can.

Of course, although the power of the machine only allows the group to shift back and forward in time over a short period, the changes caused by their trips create a ripple effect, or butterfly effect depending on your preference, and David realises that his attempts to sort things out only makes them worse.

Project Almanac is a lo-fi time travel, found footage movie that ticks all the relevant cliché boxes that those sub genres demand. But at the same time, as well as having everything that would normally culminate in a dull rerun of everything that these movies can sometimes stand for, we actually get a fun film. Consider a mix up of Chronicle and Back to the Future and you're pretty much there. You actually like the characters, which is always a nice change when you get a young cast, the lo-fi aspect works in its favour, and overall it's a pleasant surprise to realise that the running time has shot by. Sure, it does falter in certain aspects, as all time travel films do, but you can't help but enjoy this.

This deserves to be seen by as many people as possible. It doesn't purport to be big or clever, but it does over-achieve. Go, grab it now.

Extras: *Alternate opening & endings / Deleted scenes*

J.D. GILLAM

7

THE HAPPINESS OF THE KATAKURIS

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: TAKASHI MIIKE / SCREENPLAY: KIKUMI YAMAGISHI / STARRING: KENJI SAWADA, KEIKO MATSUZAKA, SJINJI TAKEDA, KIYOSHIRÔ IMAWANO / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 22ND

Directing and releasing multiple films every year is a tall order for any filmmaker, but cult favourite Takashi Miike had his work cut out for him. After bloodying the underground, and courting commercial plaudits and acclaim with ultra-violent and sexually explicit works, he had to throw a curveball to keep audiences engaged. The Happiness of the Katakuris, a film as slippery to define as it is categorise, is exactly that.

Based on the Korean comedy The Quiet Family, the film shows a family out of work who immerse themselves into a pet project; opening a bed and breakfast in a sparse but beautiful mountain region on the promise of a new road to drive guests their way. When their first guest finally arrives, he kills himself. The second and third, likewise, end up as stiffs. Instead of facing the inevitable bad publicity, the family bury the bodies. Things get odder and odder.

Although the film is like watching a series of visual non-sequiturs, it's a complete work, with a clear cut structure. But it takes unexpected tangents into subplots that ultimately fizzle out, and takes regular breaks for fantastical asides; whether it's the song and dance numbers the family ostensibly use to share their grief, or the trippy claymation sequences.

With its great ensemble cast, including the late rock star Kiyoshirô Imawano, a wicked sense of humour and excellent choreography, it stands well on its own merits. Whether it's a satire or not, it's the most enjoyable work of Miike's impressive oeuvre.

Extras: *Audio commentary / Documentary / Featurette / Interviews / TV spots / Trailers / Booklet*

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

8

REVENGE OF THE GREEN DRAGONS

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: WAI-KEUNG LAU, ANDREW LOO / SCREENPLAY: ANDREW LOO, MICHAEL DI JIACOMO / STARRING: RAY LIOTTA, JUSTIN CHON, SHUYA CHANG, KEVIN WU, HARRY SHUM JR. / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 29TH

Based on true events, this crime drama centres on a 1980s New York-set story of two Chinese immigrant brothers Sonny (Justin Chon) and Steven (Kevin Wu), who are recruited by and rise up the ranks of violent gang "The Green Dragons". However, the gang's brutal activities and criminal dealings soon attract the attention of the law and the brothers' bond is severely tested. What sounds like a potentially hard story of police negligence, illegal immigration, brotherhood and a deconstruction of the American dream (mentioned but not explored), is in fact more an occasionally stylish violent caper with very little to distinguish it beyond that. Revenge of the Green Dragons has a potentially exciting story here but only ever seems to posture rather than perform. The opening is brutal and, attention-grabbing and while some of the wincing scenes of violence are effective, by the time of the limp finish (which veers away from the story's later revenge set up), the film becomes little more than a beige crime/drama.

The influence of Scorsese is not felt much and the direction is disappointingly straightforward and by the books. True, the final twist may surprise some, but when you don't particularly know why you should care it means nothing. Some of the film's most violent moments feel forced (a rape scene in particular) in order to try and provoke a response and, as a result, many may find the film reprehensibly attention-seeking at points. It is a very unfortunate result for a film that certainly is not the out-and-out garbage some critics have suggested but is just a film that will disappear from your memory shortly after its end titles roll.

It is not all bad; Justin Chon gives a great performance as Sonny and there is an amount of appeal to his character and his connection to Wu's Steven. The film also looks great at certain points (even if style often takes over substance) and there are the occasional flourishes to the story (especially in its earlier moments). Sadly this is drowned out to a great degree by the film's messy flaws, the biggest of which is its thoroughly lacking plot, which just chooses the usual routes taken by the gangster genre and makes it do. The film has very little to say and when it makes a point, often the movie leaves it unexplored. It says it all that after viewing the film, we felt the most lingering aspect was its great looking dragon gun smoke poster that recalled the Danish film adaptations of Steig Larson's Millennium Trilogy. In fact, watch those movies instead or just revisit Internal Affairs or Goodfellas because there is very little here that demands to be seen. Maybe we have been spoilt over the years with excellent crime drama and as a result we are being a touch harsh here with what is a fairly average (not entirely awful) film but considering the talent and potential involved in this project, the results can't help but come as a pretty big disappointment. In short, you may find something to enjoy in this film but unfortunately it suffers greatly next to the copious back catalogue of the genre and in the end the biggest crime here is the lack of fire in this dragon.

Extras: *Audio Commentary with Directors / The Not So American Dream / A Claustrophobic World / Stitches In Time / Deleted Scenes*

JACK BOTTOMLEY

4

SUPERNATURAL: SEASON 9

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / CREATOR: ERIC KRIPKE / STARRING: JARED PADALECKI, JENSEN ACKLES, JIM BEAVER, MISHA COLLINS, MARK SHEPPARD / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The misadventures of Sam and Dean Winchester seem like they'll never end. The show, which has recently been commissioned for an eleventh season next year, seems unstoppable, and it's nice to see that a collected edition of last year's season has finally arrived.

Season 9 of Supernatural is a return to form for the long-running TV series. This makes sense when you realise that it's a soft reboot of sorts. Season 8 ended with a potential 'show ending finale' - Sam was about to die and all the angels had been kicked out of Heaven.

As cliff-hangers go, it was a powerful one, but also one that would be hard to top. Fortunately, the next season began quite strongly and avoids descending into farce. From the get go, we have Sam fighting Death itself and angels rampaging across the Earth. Long-time ally Castiel has lost all of his angelic powers and is mortal. Not only does this allow actor Misha Collins to get all the best lines, it also throws some of the flaws of the show into sharp contrast; Castiel's journey of discovery highlights the essential lack of humanity that Supernatural has had since Season 6 onwards, and this arc tries to fix that. Sheppard turns in a similarly masterful performance as Crowley, the King of Hell, who begins the series locked in the Winchester's basement. If all of this sounds like a bit much, rest assured that this is just another Tuesday for Sam and Dean.

The arch plot deals with the disenfranchised angels and starts to tie up loose ends that have dogged the show since Season 6. With hell lacking its king, another demon attempts to take the role and the result is a war of attrition with humanity slap bang in the middle. Of course, the two brothers are keeping secrets from each other and there's plenty of angst. The show's internal mythology begins to take over at this point, and there are some lovely stabs at the uniquely American interpretation of Christianity and TV evangelism in particular.

Fans of Dean are well served throughout, though the episode First Born is a great mix of violence and horror and has some brilliant scowling from actor Jensen Ackles. The season finale is a similar treat, with a shock ending that will make you want to see Season 10 immediately.

There are a raft of extras available as well, which mostly explain how much loving detail and thoughtful backstory go into the show. The commentary is also worth a listen, though don't expect anything world-changing. Overall, a great collection of extras and episodes, and it's easy to see why this show is so popular.

Extras: *Audio commentaries / Nine featurettes / 2013 Comic-Con panel / Deleted scenes / Gag reel*

ED FORTUNE

++++++++++ **8**

THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MISS OSBOURNE (1981)

BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: WALERIAN BOROWCZYK / STARRING: UDO KIER, MARINA PIERRO, PATRICK MAGEE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Walerian Borowczyk's The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Miss Osbourne is very aptly named. Falling in an unusual middle ground between art house cinema and sexually exploitative horror, it's a film that is at once gorgeously mysterious and unflinchingly violent. It's such a contradiction at times that one struggles to make sense of what's going on, despite the fact that the film's plot is readily apparent to anyone who is familiar with Robert Louis Stevenson's classic work.

However, while Borowczyk's take on Dr. Jekyll sticks with the violence and transformation, so much more is added. Henry Jekyll is engaged to a Miss Fanny Osbourne, and the gathering at this house is a celebration of their impending nuptials. And that's basically where the similarities end, because in this version, there's a prosthetic penis which looks like a weapon. Also, men and women alike are raped to death and Fanny and Henry nearly feast upon one another at the end. It's a strange thing. It's hazy and red and violet, and given that all of the women are made to take morphine, while the men are left to bumble about like the Keystone Kops, the entirety of the movie might as well be some sort of waking nightmare.

Once again, though, Udo Kier is what elevates this film from mediocrity. His mere presence in a film can do so much, despite having someone voice him in a manner that renders Kier a weakened character. You'd expect Kier and Jekyll or Hyde to speak with a resonant, authoritative tone, but it's a bland persona cast by the looped dialogue. It's terrible for everyone involved – Dr. Jekyll & Miss Osbourne might as well be a cartoon for all of the squeaky, goofy emoting going on here – but Kier, as the protagonist and antagonist both, needs a bit of strength. Thankfully, his steely gaze can make for a discomforting means of communicating his intent.

Also helpful in deciphering Dr. Jekyll and Miss Osbourne are the myriad supplemental materials on this disc. Michael Brooke's introduction to the films of Borowczyk provides an excellent overview of the man's work, and places this film nicely within an interesting pantheon of experimental and exploitation film. The interviews with the film's stars are lovely reminisces, but as per usual with this sort of thing, provide more cute stories than actual filmic insight.

We recommend watching this with subtitles, as the dubbing is atrocious and, as the film looks amazing, any excuse to soak up more of Arrow's excellent new 2K transfer should be welcomed. There's hours of content here, and even if you're not the sort to look into Polish-directed, French-language adaptations of classic English literature, this is an excellent opportunity to start.

Extras: *Audio commentary / Six featurettes / Interviews / Two short films / Booklet*

NICK SPACEK

++++++++++ **7**

ZOMBIEWORLD

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: VARIOUS / SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: KEVIN ALLEN-BICKNELL, JOSÉ MARÍA ANGORRILLA, RAY ARALIOS, IBBY BAKALOUMA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Since anthologies have been proving increasingly popular again, it's little wonder that horror's prodigal monster has gotten its very own. Unlike The ABC's of Death, Dread Central and Ruthless Pictures' Zombieworld takes more of a Tales from the Crypt, Creepshow, The House That Dripped Blood et al approach. The shorts are held together with a tenuous narrative, in this case the recently bitten TV news anchor Marvin Gloat desperate to keep reporting even as he turns.

One of the funnier shorts is David Muñoz and Adrian Cardona's Fist of Jesus, where God's son botches his first pop at resurrection and sparks a zombie outburst. The answer is a splatterpunk malaise splicing anarchic Evil Dead effects with Monty Python's kooky slapstick. Credit is due for arming our Lord and Saviour with dead fish and pitching him against undead cowboys. A more subtle, and arguably funnier, effort is Luke Asa Guidici's Certified, a wind-up of Americana where a little girl terrifies a mailman to devilish effect.

But it's not all gore worship; the best of the anthology are the more understated entries, including Phil Haine's I Am Lonely, where a bloke finds his flatmate dying from a bite wound. It's essentially a monologue, loaded with subtle laughs and a killer twist. Zach Ramelan's Dead Rush is more straight-up survival horror, with a first person perspective to keep things lively. Others are boring or just downright annoying; Temporal in particular is especially dated and trite.

There's some genuine talent on show here, the best short in the collection being Cameron McCulloch's Home. The Australian-set short demonstrates the best use of props, shots and script, making for a surprisingly moving conclusion. After a few shorts under her belt, it's about time McCulloch took on a feature.

Zombieworld is a cross-continental, undead celebration splicing trash and gold together. You get whiplash from the continual shift in tone and style and dreadful CGI, but it's a gory curiosity that any zombie fan should be glad to get their grubby hands on.

Extras: *Marathon Apocalypse short film*

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

6

OUT OF THE DARK

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: LLUÍS QUÍLEZ / SCREENPLAY: JAVIER GULLÓN, DAVID PASTOR, ALEX PASTOR / STARRING: JULIA STILES, SCOTT SPEEDMAN, STEPHEN REA, PIXIE DAVIES / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 22ND

From a superfluous stormy night in 1992 to a modern day South American setting, Lluís Quílez's debut supernatural chiller needs a lot of forgiveness on the viewer's part to get anything out of its narrative.

Out of the Dark marks the first foray into English language movie-making for Columbian independent production company Dynamo. It sees Sarah Harriman (Stiles) move husband Paul (Speedman) and daughter Hannah (Davies) to Santa Clara, Columbia to take on a managerial role in her father's paper factory. It isn't long before the town's grizzly past blurs into the modern, leaving ghostly echoes in their new house. Together Sarah and Paul discover the dark past of the manufacturing plant and the source of their daughter's increasing illness.

Most of the cast fail to do much with the lacklustre script, instead just going along for the ride. But the presence of understated character actor Stephen Rea is a highlight; his accent might waver but he delivers a solid performance and helps tie things together. Julia Stiles isn't given nearly enough to do and ends up taking a backseat while Speedman's Paul does most of the grubby legwork.

The plot owes a tremendous debt to the supernatural horrors of the '70s, with whiffs of The Omen and The Amityville Horror, but also the affecting Spanish chiller The Orphanage. Given the Columbian setting and Spanish/Columbian co-production, it's a shame that the setting is so visually underused. There's some interesting shots and adventurous camera work, but it's been haphazardly strung together.

At its very best, Out of the Dark is a cautionary tale on globalisation and the toxic effect of big business. A deeper exploration of this would have helped make for a stronger film, with more of a streamlined sense of horror. It's a mess, for sure, but there are things that work well within it. It's a bold idea stuck in a script that plays it very safe and sticks to predictable genre conventions.

Extras: *Featurette*

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

5

KINGSMAN: THE SECRET SERVICE

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: MATTHEW VAUGHN / SCREENPLAY: MATTHEW VAUGHN, JANE GOLDMAN / STARRING: TARON EGERTON, COLIN FIRTH, SAMUEL L. JACKSON, MICHAEL CAINE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Matthew Vaughn returns with his adaptation (and much altered - often for the better) of Mark Millar and Dave Gibbons' The Secret Service. Kingsman: The Secret Service boasted the promise of espionage action and enjoyment, but even the most optimistic among us will be shocked with the results, as this film further exemplifies what a Hollywood hellraiser Vaughn is.

It takes a very different approach (from the comic), in that the agency in question is not MI6 but Kingsman - a secretive organisation that operates via a tailor business. The film tells the story of veteran agent Harry Hart (Firth) moulding a young, streetwise lad nicknamed Eggsy (Egerton) into a super spy. It is a relatively simple set-up but one that takes constant joy in both parodying and paying homage to the conventions of the spy movie genre. This star-studded, ridiculous and deliriously fun romp plays like a retro Bond movie as directed by your inner 14 year old (with a profane gob) and as written by you and your candy-gobbling mates! And while there are the odd minor wrinkles tonally, you'll be having far too much fun to allow them to be an issue.

Vaughn and Goldman's script crackles with the violent comic energy of Kick-Ass and the spectacular action of an X-Men film. The dialogue is sometimes suave and other times knowingly cheesy, and the plot delightfully offers a Moore era Bond throwback with Brosnan era technology, that'll have you asking, "Why so serious, James?" From Sofia Boutella's razor-legged femme fatale side antagonist Gazelle to the superb choreography, this film offers action aplenty and the constant gut-busting script is the olive in the martini. The opening does throw you a tad as to what to expect, but from there on in the momentum never stops.

The cast clearly love every minute of it too, with young Taron Egerton making a hugely likeable central character to root for. Although many may well be more taken by Colin Firth, who sends his own image up beautifully as he powers the film's central message that the wealthy are not always the best of us. Indeed Firth and Egerton have a snappy chemistry throughout and are well matched by one of the most fantastically whacked-out bad guys in recent memory in Samuel L. Jackson. This is no The Spirit-style camp; Jackson steals numerous scenes as the film's rich, colourfully-dressed, lispy, pop culture megalomaniac, whose whole character is as lovingly ridiculous as his plot for a "new world". And fine support is on offer too, with Mark Strong as a Q-esque Kingsman operative, and fans of the source material will giggle at the film's cameo.

How much you take from Kingsman will admittedly depend on how much hyperactivity you can handle, but for all Vaughn's off the leash violence and frenzied thrills, Kingsman never loses its groove. The film has a fitting personal touch to it and by the end you will be shocked at just how accomplished the film is. Pop culture gags, genre satire and social class misconceptions are ideas that are all tackled by a film that looks like mere escapism but has an understated intellect beneath the glamorous visual firecrackers. This is a slick, stonking espionage caper that may well have already taken the award for most fun film of 2015.

Extras: *Six-part Kingsman: The Secret Service Revealed featurette*

JACK BOTTOMLEY

9

CAN'T COME OUT TO PLAY

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: JOHN MCNAUGHTON / SCREENPLAY: STEPHEN LANCELLOTTI / STARRING: SAMANTHA MORTON, MICHAEL SHANNON, NATASHA CALIS, CHARLIE TAHAN, PETER FONDA / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 22ND

John McNaughton's debut was the groundbreaking and surprisingly low-key Henry: Portrait of a Serial Killer. His last feature was in 2001. It's good to have him back.

Can't Come Out to Play (aka The Harvest) could best be described as brooding. It begins with Maryann (Natasha Calis) moving into her grandparents' remote country house, having recently lost both parents. Isolated and filled with grief, she chances upon Andy (Charlie Tahan), a wheelchair-bound neighbour of roughly her own age – and a prisoner in his own home.

To say any more would be to spoil the effect, for while there are a couple of twists in Can't Come Out to Play's tail, and rather big ones too, that's not really what McNaughton's film is all about. Rather, it is an exercise in the accumulation of unease, a disquiet that pays off dramatically in the second half. There are none of the histrionics of McNaughton's underrated gem Wild Things; instead the performances are universally understated – almost deliberately muted, even – making the revelations in the latter sections of the film all the more surreal. The only character who truly gets to bite is Samantha Morton's Katherine, and while the composure of those around her might seem improbable, the way in which it isolates her as the story unfolds is perfectly consistent as both characters and plot unravel.

The only misstep is perhaps the prologue, which is used to introduce both one of the main protagonists and several key themes, but which unintentionally points the viewer's attention the wrong way – the upshot being that it helps maintain the unsettled feel, and distracts the viewer from guessing the otherwise obvious twists.

The music and cinematography are equally minimal, and anyone who enjoyed the matter-of-fact approach of Henry will recognise a similar leaning here. What might have been a deliberately lurid chiller after the fashion of an Exorcist or Amityville Horror is instead cool and creepy, the subdued colours of the autumnal outdoors matching the restrained interiors. There is very little by way of humour or human warmth, and on the rare occasions when the soundtrack indicates a little levity, the moment passes all too soon. Almost the entire film takes place in cold, milky daylight and this opaque quality is reflected in the acting.

The two juvenile leads are excellent, easily the equal of their more distinguished adult counterparts, and the resolution is satisfying and appropriate. Can't Come Out to Play will be too modest to catch the attention of many, but it lingers in the memory and has a consistency of tone that will impress those who allow it to engage with them.

Oh, but don't watch it with the kids. They'll never forgive you.

J. R. SOUTHALL

7

IT FOLLOWS

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: DAVID ROBERT MITCHELL / STARRING: MAIKA MONROE, KEIR GILCHRIST, CAROLLETTE PHILLIPS, LOREN BASS, OLIVIA LUCCARDI / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 29TH

The scene opens with a pretty brunette girl in tight, short summer clothes and red stilettos running startled into the middle of a perfectly parallel suburbia. This is against a screeching, layered soundtrack that's stylised to emphasise the evening spread out against the sky above those little box houses made of ticky tacky. David Robert Mitchell's film is sometimes reminiscent of a giallo, but isn't one. This is a horror film that plays tricks on the brain as it follows its main character, Jay, and her friends as she navigates the spectres of sex and death in Detroit.

Extremely well-made, much of the framing sees the teens sitting in circles, shutting the audience out and creating an intense sense of claustrophobic paranoia about their relationships. This is compounded by Disasterpeace's soundtrack. It's a highly stylised, heavy electronic overlay that feels like it's what the teens' mood is, rather than what we'd expect them to listen to. This, together with a large number of static long-shots, emphasises a dislocated dread; no one knows quite what's going on or what it means. This self-conscious artistry suggests a poetic representation of them trying to understand the urban, adult world while being terrified of the slow death of Starbucks and coffee spoons as supposed romance. It is almost preposterously pretentious and, in places, naked in its silliness, yet works because it's so confident that its cleverness is interesting.

Maika Monroe is the star of the show as the tormented Jay. She looks the typical teen scream queen and has a good set of lungs on her, but with a face that does really good emo. She's also a great giallo-techno-porno-temptress when in her summer dress. This makes sense as hers is a partly introspective, partly demonstrative role about the way teens are expected to react to SEX and, yes, it's a little heavy. She's balanced out with fizzle and pop from her friends, particularly Keir Gilchrist as Paul, who has an adorable, puppy-doggish charm with an insistent and slightly seedy sexual undertone beneath his chivalry. He's just a boy, after all.

It Follows is a shape-shifter. It has the beats of a typical teen slasher but projects the brainless babes, boyfriends and bonking through an art house approach that glows with the allure of tension rather than chair-jumping terror. Instead of focusing on the frolicky teens' flesh, we have artistic static shots in which they look moodily into the middle distance, posed as much as ponderous. The entire story can be interpreted differently depending on your view of the intercourse. The one constant, highlighted when it drowns a little under its own philosophical weight, is that it's keener to be seen as a Gothic intellectual tango than following any particular logic. That said, its imagery is so twisted, yet so beautifully and starkly captured, that it's oddly clinically matter-of-fact.

If thought freaks you out, it follows this will terrify you.

DR KAREN OUGHTON

9

KILLER MERMAIDS

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: MILAN TODOROVIC / SCREENPLAY: BARRY KEATING, MILAN KONJEVIC / STARRING: FRANCO NERO, KRISTINA KLEBE, NATALIE BURN, DRAGAN MICANOVIC / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 29TH

"They tried to call it Killer Mermaids," said director Milan Todorovic, introducing what was then called Nymph, at Frightfest 2014. This, to peals of audience laughter and derision. Fast forward to almost a year later, where what was then called Nymph has arrived on DVD, now retitled... yep, Killer Mermaids. Cue peals of audience laughter and derision.

Killer Mermaids, Killer Mermaid, Nymph, Mamula... whatever you want to call it (not Killer Mermaids), one of the odder movies of the year is here, its story, for better or worse, very much doing what it says on the tin; killer mermaids, hunting a pretty young group of holidaygoers in beautiful Montenegro. Separating this from the rest of its Syfy ilk is a surprising level of technical competence and the presence of one Franco Nero as a mysterious, grizzled local.

By default the world's most second-most notable Serbian film, Killer Mermaids goes easy on the *shudders* newborn porn and dodgy underground antics, instead laying on the camp as thick as they can get it. The overbearing nightclub rave soundtrack only adds to a feeling of weird disco you'd struggle to find outside of the Eurovision Song Contest or a sweaty nightclub somewhere warm and abroad. Not even the entrance of the titular murderous mermaids can save Killer Mermaids from feeling as desperately daft as it is, no matter how straight Todorovic and his cast play it. From the front of the camera (the appearance of Nero never seems any less bizarre, no matter how long he sticks around) to behind it (where the catering company is listed as one of the producers) it feels genuinely fresh, even if that doesn't always translate to good filmmaking. Even better, haters of reading can rejoice (heathens!) - to appeal to a bigger audience, Todorovic had his film made in English. As though a title like Killer Mermaids won't have everyone gagging to see the main attraction.

Utterly, befuddlingly ridiculous, Killer Mermaids is a beautiful oddity. Silly, sexy and strange, it won't be everyone's cup of tea, but its siren song is well worth hearing out.

JOEL HARLEY

7

OST

THE STARBURST GUIDE TO THE LATEST SOUNDTRACKS BY NICK SPACEK

Several big announcements came right after we went to press for last month's issue, so some of this news may be quite old hat to you. However, for those who've not heard it, Waxwork Records will release the score to perhaps the best-regarded horror film of 2014, Jennifer Kent's **The Babadook**. The score, by Jed Kurzel, is decidedly beautiful, while at the same time absolutely unnerving. This marks the first official release of the score in any format, so we're eagerly looking forward to what gets released.

Void Recordings will release more music from Joseph Bishara. The label's released nearly every score Bishara has composed, and thus it comes as no surprise that **Insidious: Chapter 3** will also be coming from them. It's out now via digital download, and will be released on LP early in July. While the films he works with might be less than satisfying, Bishara's music is always interesting and, above all, disconcerting and uncomfortably original.

Intrada is loading up your summer with some amazing stuff. First up is a 2-CD set of the complete Alan Silvestri score for 1995's **Judge Dredd**. As the label explains, Silvestri composed over two hours of music for a film that came in at 96 minutes, meaning a lot ended up on the cutting room floor. Further complicating things is that Epic Records' release of the soundtrack in '95 only featured about 40 minutes of the score, with the first five tracks given over to music from the likes of The Cure and White Zombie. To add further confusion, the music used in the film wasn't actually on the disc at all. Intrada's solved all that, with this set featuring one disc with all of the actual film score, along with a second disc of alternate material, all of which has been mastered for better sonic dynamics.

Going back a decade to 1985, Intrada will also release David Shire's score for the Disney film, **Return to Oz**. Again in a 2-CD set, Shire's score is presented as a complete film version on the first disc, and a reproduction of the original LP release on the second. The original LP release was evidently curated and edited by Shire himself, though "*many of those LP mixes differed in substantial ways and in some cases became wholly new versions distinct from their film counterparts.*" All of it is mastered from the Disney vaults.

One Way Static Records announced three releases last month, and pretty much every single one made me lose my composure in one way or another. There's the split score for **Mark of the Devil** and **Mark of the Devil II**, with German composer Michael Holm's score for the former on the A-side, and the Don Banks, John Scott and Sam Sklair score the latter on the B-side. Holm's score is in mono, while the Banks/Scott/Sklair composition is in stereo. Given the recent Arrow re-release of the original **Mark of the Devil** on Blu-ray, I'm excited to hear Holm's work on its own, especially given that liner notes will be from both him and the film's star, Udo Kier. The release will be made available in the two vinyl versions: the deluxe edition on limited colour vinyl of either orange crush splatter or coke bottle green, limited to 500 copies each, or the standard on black, limited to 1000 copies. All vinyl editions will be packaged in a deluxe tip-on gatefold jacket with a printed insert. There will also be a cassette edition, limited to 300 copies worldwide with alternate artwork.

Strangely, the label's next release will be 1980's **The Boogey Man**, by Tim Krog. **Boogey Man**'s soundtrack was re-released just last year by Motionsound Records in an edition of 500, making this release a little puzzling. This edition will be limited to 1000 copies on black in green vinyl, with a CD record – a compact disc which "only plays on your turntable" – containing radio spot audio for the 1980 film, much in the same way they included a flexi for **Last House on the Left**. Like **Mark of the Devil**, there will also be a cassette version with alternate artwork.

I'm most excited, however, about the label's 7-inch release of the Dokken tracks from 1987's **A Nightmare on Elm Street 3**. The single will feature both *Dream Warriors* and *Into the Fire*, on either solid yellow Dokken or Freddy sweater striped vinyl, each limited to 500 copies each.

Varèse Sarabande launched a CD subscription series, entitled LP to CD, last month. The idea is that the label will feature soundtracks from their vinyl archives that have never been released on CD, starting with Charles Bernstein's score for the slasher **April Fool's Day**. Given that the nice-ish looking copies I've seen in my local shop run about $40, this seems a good start. The releases – which will be housed in replica LP jackets – will not be for purchase individually. Those who sign up for the full 12-month run get a carrying case.

I Am Shark's vinyl pressing of the **Star Wars: The Phantom Menace** score by John Williams has been out for almost a year and a half now, but only available on three of the five variant editions. The label, after "*a long mess of changes and renegotiations*," now has *Hyperdrive* (black with white

splatter) and *Darth Maul* (black with red/gold stripe) available for purchase, and they look amazing. Here's hoping this means we'll soon see **Attack of the Clones** available.

Speaking of releases which keep getting re-releases, Silva Screen reissued the soundtrack to **The Wicker Man** – yes, again. Given that their 2013 fortieth anniversary edition LP sold out so quickly, the label has opted for a second repress. This version's identical to the previous one, but is on white vinyl, rather than black, and doesn't include a certificate from cover artist Richey Beckett. It's also an edition of 1000, rather than 500, meaning you ought to have a better shot at snagging one.

Thanks to a sample posted to their Instagram page, we now know what Tiger Lab Vinyl's next release will be. Currently out for mastering is the absolute classic **Ghost in the Shell**. That's literally all we know, but the fact that there's a non-bootleg version finally available on LP has us beyond excited.

The latest installment from Milan Records' team-up with **Drive** director Nicolas Winding Refn is pretty amazing. Given that the series *Nicolas Winding Refn Presents* has thus far brought us the scores to **Oldboy** and **It Follows**, it seems a logical progression to discover that there's now a double LP edition of Basil Poledouris' 1987 score for **RoboCop**. With a film that seems to get more prescient the further we go into the future, this score's an absolute necessity for any fan of action or sci-fi.

WaterTower Music released Junkie XL's score for **Mad Max: Fury Road** in the United States last month, and it's jam-packed. All of the cuts are extended versions of what you hear in the film, and it seems as if Tom Holkenborg wanted to make this release a proper album, rather than simply a collection of cues as heard in the movie. Here in the UK, it's available from Sony Music, and came out earlier this month. It's also available as a double vinyl LP from Mondo. It comes in a die-cut slip cover, with two interchangeable inserts designed by Boneface, and is pressed on exclusive 180-gram white vinyl with silver colour-in-colour. It looks amazing, as do all of Mondo's releases.

Also available from Mondo will be Death Waltz Recording Company's latest soundtrack release. They've gone back to the nasties for the 1981 sequel to **Anthropophagus**; Joe D'Amato's **Absurd**, scored by Italian musician Carlo Maria

Cordio. It's a double LP, with a cover featuring embossed intestines (a notable scene in both **Absurd** and its predecessor), and is a dual release with Italy's CAM Records. The album not only features every cue from **Absurd**, but also all of Cordio's cues for 1982's **Pieces**.

If you'd like all of the music for **Pieces** – meaning not just Cordio's music, but that composed by Stelvio Cipriani and Fabio Frizzi – you'll need to track down the first official release of the score by the wonderfully-named We Release Whatever the Fuck We Want Records. It's limited to 500 copies on vinyl.

I think we've finally hit the point where our pleas have been heard, and video game scores are now what we can call a 'thing.' Ghostly will be releasing Daniel Rosenfeld (aka C418)'s **Minecraft Alpha** score on LP in August. Well – half of it, at least. It's 12 of **Alpha**'s 24 tracks, but the cover art is gorgeous, and you can always snag the other ones on Bandcamp.

Other video game music comes from the new label, Data Discs, who will be releasing the score to two Sega games for their first outings. First up is Yuzo Koshiro's **Streets of Rage** – and the label even stated out of the gate that they'll have the other two instalments in the trilogy forthcoming. It's coming out on 180-gram vinyl, either as translucent red vinyl with black splatter, exclusive to the Data Discs website, or as translucent red or black.

Second is more Koshiro music, alongside Takenobu Mitsuyoshi, Ryuji Iuchi, and Osamu Murata, in a selection of orchestral works from **Shenmue**, the groundbreaking open-world Dreamcast

game. It will also be on 180-gram vinyl, with a translucent blue colour-in-colour effect exclusive to the Data Discs website, as well as translucent or black. The artwork for both releases is taken from the original versions of the games, meaning it has an excellent retro vibe to it, sure to spark the interest of any classic gamer. Both releases have also been newly remastered.

For those that love their film scores with a bit of a twist, Italy's Backwards label will soon have out **Nostra Signora delle Tenebre**, a double LP which sees 'Italian occult psychedelia' acts such as Lamusa, Mamuthones, and Cannibal Movie interpreting the likes of Pino Donaggio, Ennio Morricone, and Bruno Nicolai. The two cuts they previewed online are intoxicating, and do a remarkable job of taking this classic film music into the modern age, while still remaining faithful to the original compositions. It's limited to 500 copies, with 100 of those on red vinyl with all kinds of extras, exclusively available from the Backwards website.

Repeated Viewing (also known as Alan Sinclair, of Glasgow) has been putting out film score-influenced albums for several years now. Be it the giallo horror of **Frozen Existence** or the action thriller vibes of **Street Force**, Repeated Viewing has been one of a solid group of soundtrack enthusiasts really doing a great job of mining and updating classic library sounds. It's great to be able to announce that Sinclair now has a film score out via Wil-Ru Records. The score, for the neo-giallo **The Three Sisters**, is an excellent compilation of everything Repeated Viewing does so well: synth and drum paranoia, glimmering romantic themes, and even some avant-garde chimes à la Morricone. It's out now on compact disc and digital download.

Finally, my wife and I went to our son's end of term symphonic band concert and were pleasantly surprised to hear that the students performed Martin O'Donnell and Michael Salvatori's *Halo Suite*, the music to **Halo** from the popular Video Games Live spectacle. It's always a pleasure to discover that the children are getting an opportunity for exposure to symphonic music outside the classics. Additionally, putting game score music on a program with traditional selections does a fine job of elevating this music we love so much to a level where it might be regarded as more legitimate. Good on the instructor, and here's hoping for more of this.

BRAVE NEW WORDS

ED FORTUNE BRINGS YOU THE LATEST NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF GENRE LITERATURE

John Scalzi Signs $3.4m Book Deal

Hugo-winning author and skilled social media manipulator John Scalzi has signed a 13-novel deal worth £2.2m, with genre publishers Tor. The arrangement requires the outspoken novelist to produce three young adult and 10 adult books in 10 years. Scalzi is best known for his **Old Man's War** series, which has been optioned for a TV series by the Syfy channel. **Redshirts** and **Lock In**, two of his more recent novels, are also in development for adaptation to the small screen. He is no stranger to TV, as he consulted on the show **Stargate: Universe** back in the day.

Author Tanith Lee, 67, Dies Peacefully in Her Sleep

Prolific and ground-breaking author Tanith Lee passed away on May 24th at her home in East Sussex, England. Of the 90 novels and 200 short stories that she produced, she will be best remembered for the British Fantasy Award winning **Night's Master** (which began her **Flat Earth** series) and the **Birthgrave** novels. She also penned the scripts for two episodes of **Blakes 7**, namely *Sand* and *Sarcophagus*.

THE GRAVEYARD BOOK Wins Three US Audie Awards

Neil Gaiman has won yet more awards, this time for the adaptation of **The Graveyard Book**. It won best children's title ages 8-12, best multi-voiced performance, and the distinguished achievement in production award. The audio production featured a broad cast, including Derek Jacobi, Miriam Margolyes, Emilia Fox, Lenny Henry and Gaiman himself.

Pan MacMillan Buys DARK CIRCUS Series

Pan Macmillan has purchased the rights to Laura Lam's critically acclaimed young adult series, **Dark Circus**. They will be republishing the first two books, **Pantomime** and **Shadowplay**. These were originally published via Osprey Publishing's now defunct Strange Chemistry label. Pan Macmillan will also publish the last book in the series, **Masquerade**. The series follows the misadventures of a runaway called Micah who joins a mysterious circus only to discover that it has some dark secrets and dangerous magics.

Conan Doyle Estate to Sue Miramax Over MR HOLMES

The Estate of Sir Arthur Conan Doyle has lodged a copyright and trademark lawsuit in New Mexico federal court, alleging that the movie **Mr. Holmes** treads upon the last ten of Doyle's **Sherlock Holmes** stories, published between 1923 and 1927. The bulk of the **Holmes** stories are in the public domain, but there is still a possible case for the later works.

Gemmell Award 2015 Shortlist Opens

Voting is now open for the 2015 Gemmell Awards via their website. The three awards are The Morningstar Award for Best Debut Fantasy Novel in English, The Ravenheart Award for Best Fantasy Cover Art and The Legend Award for Best Fantasy Novel. Voting closes at midnight on Friday, July 17th. The winners will be announced on Saturday, August 8th at Nine Worlds Geekfest.

Atwood Locks Manuscript Away for Future Generations

Science fiction author Margaret Atwood has been named as the first novelist to contribute to the Future Library Project. Atwood has submitted a completed manuscript, which will be locked away until 2114. The Future Library project, organised by Scottish artist Katie Paterson, began with the planting of a forest of 1,000 trees in Nordmarka, just outside Oslo, Norway. Every year until 2114, one writer will be invited to contribute a new text to the collection, and in 2114, the trees will be cut down to provide the paper for the texts to be printed and read.

Tickets still available for Edge Lit

UK-based genre book event Edge Lit in Derby still has a few tickets left for the event. The popular one-day convention features guests such as M.R. Carey, Sarah Pinborough and Joanne Harris. It is held at the Derby Quad on Saturday, July 11th.

George R.R. Martin plush out soon

Spotted earlier this year at the New York Toy Fair, it seems that toy manufacturer Factory are going ahead with a plush version of beloved fantasy author and evil Santa stand-in, George R.R. Martin. Decked out in his fisherman's cap, this extra cuddly version of George apparently utters phrases when squeezed. We understand that these will be mostly **Game of Thrones** quotes.

STARBURST's own book podcast, **THE BOOKWORM**, is filled with all the latest news, reviews and interviews and can be found on Twitter **@radiobookworm**

ED FORTUNE HIGHLIGHTS NOTEWORTHY NEW TITLES

COMING SOON

THE EDGE OF DAWN

AUTHOR: MELINDA SNODGRASS
PUBLISHER: TITAN
RELEASE DATE: AUG 21ST

Snodgrass' fascinating series about modern day paladins taking on eldritch horrors from beyond the stars comes to a stunning conclusion in **The Edge of Dawn**. The protagonist, Richard Oort, has been through a lot and is the only person who can wield the mystical blade that protects humanity from the encroaching dark. Richard finds hope when he discovers another person who can use the sword. The catch, of course, is that this potential new paladin is only nine years old.

ZERO WORLD

AUTHOR: JASON HOUGH
PUBLISHER: DEL REY BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 11TH

Hough is fast becoming a reliable source of interesting and clever science fiction thanks to critically acclaimed books such **The Exodus Towers** and **The Plague Force**. His latest work, **Zero World**, follows the exploits of Peter Caswell, a technologically-enhanced superspy assigned to investigate the mysterious disappearance of space ship. Things make a turn for the strange when Caswell discovers a doorway to a different reality, one far more dangerous and hostile. The novel promises to be a high octane mix of spy thriller and mind-expanding sci-fi.

FOOL'S QUEST (FITZ AND THE FOOL, BOOK 2)

AUTHOR: ROBIN HOBB
PUBLISHER: HARPER VOYAGER
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 13TH

Robin Hobb's **Fitz and the Fool** series continues to delight and infuriate fans with the latest instalment, **Fool's Quest**. Dour and cynical hero Fitz has been ripped from his well-deserved retirement when his old friend the Fool comes back into his life. Worst still, his beloved Bee has been abducted by pale and mysterious raiders who spread chaos and pain everywhere they go. Fitz must become the assassin again and use his unique powers in order to save all that he loves.

THE LONG WAY TO A SMALL, ANGRY PLANET

AUTHOR: BECKY CHAMBERS
PUBLISHER: HODDER & STOUGHTON
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 13TH

Rosemary Harper is looking for a way to put the past behind her. Joining the crew of the battered old space ship *The Wayfarer* seems ideal; it's an old spaceship held together with love and cunning, crewed by a ragtag band of misfits. All this changes when a highly profitable mission through a warzone flares up tensions between the crew, beginning an emotional journey that Harper never expected to take. The crew will soon discover that space may be vast, but spaceships are very small indeed.

VISIONS

AUTHOR: KELLEY ARMSTRONG
PUBLISHER: DUTTON
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 6TH

Armstrong is always worth a look; she's a past-master at mixing the modern day with the strange to create ripping yarns that keep you gripped. **Visions** introduces us to Olivia Taylor-Jones, daughter of notorious serial killers, and Gabriel Walsh, the self-serving, morally ambiguous lawyer who became her unlikely ally. Together, they fight crime. Their success, however, has drawn the attention of some very dark forces, ones which do not appreciate the interference of this mystery solving duo. Expect a heady mix of supernatural strangeness and clever thriller action.

BOOK OF GIANTS

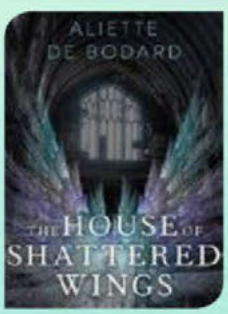
AUTHOR: PETAR MESELDZIJA
PUBLISHER: FLESK PUBLICATIONS
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 27TH

Artist and writer Petar Meseldzija takes us on a beautifully illustrated journey of discovery in his latest work, **Book of Giants**. Written in multiple stages, it details the arrival of the Giants, the clash with their human neighbours and how the two races learned to live in peace whilst still embracing their vast differences. Filled with clever little stories and utterly stunning art, **Book of Giants** looks tipped to become the fantasy coffee table book of the 21st century.

TERRY PRATCHETT'S DISCWORLD 2016 DIARY: A PRACTICAL MANUAL FOR THE MODERN WITCH (DIARIES 2016)

AUTHOR: TERRY PRATCHETT AND FRIENDS
PUBLISHER: GOLLANCZ
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 20TH

The **Discworld Diaries** are something of a tradition to many fans. Filled with cultural ephemera, background detail and as usual with these books tend to become treasured artefacts. 2016's diary gives us an insight into the wit and wisdom of some of the **Discworld**'s most-loved characters, the Witches, and will fill the gap for many until Terry's final book, **The Shepherd's Crown**, is published.



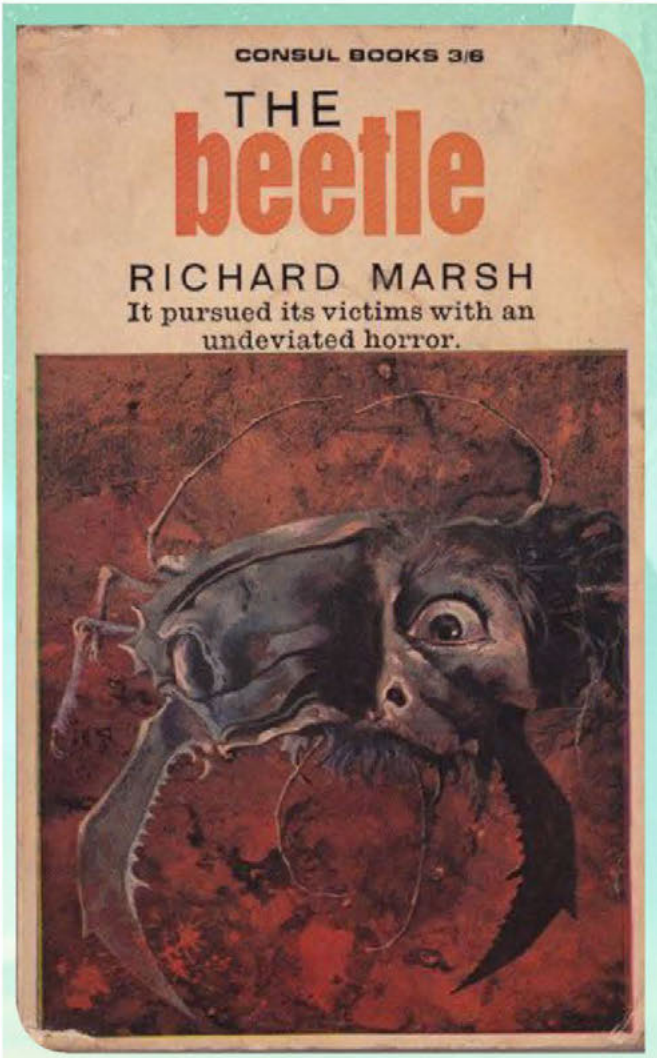
THE HOUSE OF SHATTERED WINGS

AUTHOR: ALIETTE DE BODARD
PUBLISHER: GOLLANCZ
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 20TH

Award-winning author Aliette de Bodard returns with **The House of Shattered Wings**. The streets of Paris have become haunted following the Great Magicians War. Life looks pretty bleak in this post-war dystopia, but the French continue to thirst for novelty and entertainment. Alas, it is this desire for distraction that causes the remaining occult factions to team up and accidentally threaten the soul of the city.

BOOK WORMHOLE

A MONTHLY PICK OF GENRE FICTION BY KATE FATHERS



When Dracula was published in 1897 it wasn't a hit... It didn't sell out in bookshops and people weren't clamouring for Bram Stoker's autograph, and in fact it wasn't until films like *Nosferatu: A Symphony of Horror* hit the scene that *Dracula* started to enjoy the popularity it has today. Instead, lining Victorian bookcases and set on every side table was Richard Marsh's *The Beetle*.

Now in his forties, Paul Lessingham is a Westminster superstar. He's well-respected and influential and he's engaged to be married to Marjorie Lindon, the most sought-after woman in London. But when a dark secret from his youth crops up in the city, stalking him through the streets and leaving notes in his home, he finds himself close to losing everything – to the hypnotic, shapeshifting creature known only as The Beetle.

Although it was initially successful, *The Beetle* has become what all artists dread: popular in its day. Save for a silent film in 1919, a stage adaptation, and a radio play, Marsh's book has fallen in to obscurity. And I don't understand why. *The Beetle* is an excellent read, at once a perfect example of Victorian horror fiction and a timeless piece of prose. The characters are vivid and diverse, and the description is so cinematic it would be a cinch to adapt, and even the problems - the sexism and racism of the day - are handled with grace. It also capitalised on the Egyptomania of the 1800s, a fascination which has dimmed since then but not disappeared. It has all the hallmarks of a classic, and I'm going to tell you exactly why it should be.

First, there's its construction. The prose is very modern, subtlety morphing to give each narrator a unique voice. There are four narrators in all: Robert Holt (a homeless man), Sydney Atherton (Marjorie's friend), Marjorie Lindon, and Augustus Champnell (a confidential agent). Three of their narrations overlap, which does run the risk of the book being irritatingly repetitive, but I think it bypasses this. Multiple narrators means more insight and a clear perspective on events. It also means that the biases and prejudices of one character are then challenged by another, as is the case between Marjorie and Atherton. Almost every thought Atherton has about Marjorie, she challenges in her own narration, and her compassion and humanity compensates for his cool judgement. It's a really fascinating technique, and in the end you feel like you have a complete sense of the story and the characters. There's nothing left to question.

This brings me to the second bit: the characters. As I said before, the characters are wonderfully diverse, ranging from a well-born lady to a homeless man to a supernatural Egyptian creature, and they are all given their own desires, voices and objectives. They are also all active participants in the story, seeking out people and information and, in Marjorie's case, flat-out refusing to be left out. Marjorie is my favourite character in the book. She bucks Victorian stereotypes, refusing to be cowed by Atherton or her father over any issue, including her own safety. She may be made a damsel in distress towards the end, but it's because of *her* choice—because *she* wanted to see the adventure through. That kind of agency can be difficult to find in twenty-first century fiction, let alone in a hundred-year-old work. And I love it.

Finally, there's the subject. The Victorians were obsessed with Ancient Egypt, infusing what little they knew in to literature, art, and architecture. Eventually this spread in to twentieth century film, giving us dozens of Cleopatra movies, Biblical outings, and *The Mummy* franchise. *The Beetle* reminds me a lot of *The Mummy*, both having a self-possessed heroine and an Egyptian villain who enslaves (and seems to feed off) their servants. Marsh also uses similar Egyptian imagery: cats, scarab beetles, ancient cults, and human sacrifice. I would be surprised if *The Beetle* didn't have some influence on the Hollywood horror genre, particularly when it comes to the villain. The Beetle is the embodiment of the "otherness" of Egypt, being dangerous and sexual and steeped in manipulative magic. As problematic as we know this to be today, this "othering" was a staple in fiction for years, and worked especially well in making villains more frightening. If you want to see the beginnings of some of your favourite film villains - and some storytelling staples - then this book is a perfect start.

I could go on for pages, but hopefully I've given you some idea of why *The Beetle* should be more widely read. It has everything you could want in a classic: strong characters and a compelling villain, and a well-constructed story. Whether you're fascinated by Egypt or just looking for a good horror novel, then this is for you.

‘Eloquent, shimmering writing unfurls a haunting story of childhood, grief and obsession’

SIMON CLARK

THE ELECTRIC

ANDREW DAVID

BARKER

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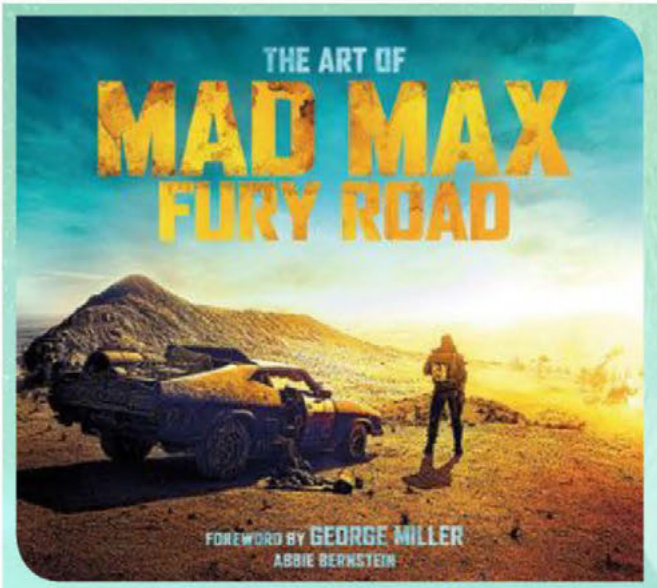

THE ART OF MAD MAX: FURY ROAD

AUTHOR: ABBIE BERNSTEIN / PUBLISHER: TITAN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Now we've all had the chance to see the glory that is Fury Road (what? You've not? Go – NOW!) we can fully appreciate this (somewhat inevitable) tie-in coffee table art book.

Through a collection of amazingly-reproduced photographs, storyboards and pre-production artwork we can re-live the film, picking out fine points which may (and probably were) missed in a blur of sand and screeching wheels. Marvel at the elaborate tattoo etched onto Max's back before he becomes a living blood bank, Nux the War Boy's chest scarification, which is meant to be an internal combustion engine, and the stunningly detailed set design of The Citadel. As everyone has sat in awe in the cinema at George Miller's stunning vision, it's glorious to be able to take one's time and immerse yourself in the world once more.

There's plenty to devour here, and tasty facts on almost every page; such as Max's jacket being modelled on the original Road Warrior leather, which was found in the building of producer Kennedy Miller Mitchell, mouldy and dirty. The wardrobe department recreated the look right down to little details, as well as keeping the famous American football shoulder pad and missing arm.

There's several interesting revelations; such as the aforementioned Nux, who in the early Brendan McCarthy illustrations looked like a cross between Bullseye from Daredevil and Tank Girl; the detail in the twisted macabre adornments in the cars and on the sets, the masks and weaponry.

Oh, and those cars... there's plenty for the petrolheads to feast their eyes on as each of the souped-up vehicles get their spot in the limelight. From Max's famous V-8 Interceptor to the elaborately knocked-together monsters such as Immortan Joe's imposing Gigahorse, which incorporates two Cadillac bodies mounted (intentionally) very sexually on top of each other.

It's also fascinating to read how much of the effect and stunt work was done in-camera. Sure, there's CGI shots filling out the expanse of The Citadel, and the terrifying toxic storm couldn't have taken place without computer enhancement, but the sheer volume of practical props, effects and sets makes this an absolute pleasure to flick through and absorb. Like the film itself, it's a pleasurable assault on the eyes, and certainly an essential addition to any film fan's collection.

MARTIN UNSWORTH

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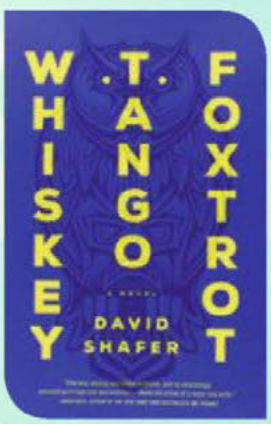

WHISKEY TANGO FOXTROT

AUTHOR: DAVID SHAFER / PUBLISHER: PENGUIN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

If there's anything even definitely negative about David Shafer's debut novel, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot, it's that across its 400+ pages things take an awfully long time to get going. However, once things do get going, you're in danger of giving yourself papercuts from flicking the pages at an abnormally high speed in order to uncover this bizarre tale of digital paranoia Shafer concocts.

Whiskey Tango Foxtrot depicts the escapades of a screwed-over medical worker, a junkie self-help author, and a drunkard school teacher, all of whom inevitably give the novel a three-books-in-one feel. This motley trio come under the unwanted attention of a ruthless organisation dubbed The Committee, who seeks to change how the world's digital information sharing operates and control it for their own wicked ends.

A pulpy-sounding set-up to be sure, but it's given a snarling, punk-ish deliverance through Shafer's style of writing. His is a mixture of the laidback cool you aspired to be in your teen years with a freakish paranoia that fits the characters and the story marvellously. The core trio are an intoxicatingly wicked group of ruffians, and Shafer devotes countless chapters in making sure you're as entwined into their emotional core as possible. The plot has a jittering, stop/start rawness about it that is frustratingly exhausting to become engrossed in, but that engrossment is inevitable.

Shafer's obsessively detailed style of writing does save Whiskey Tango Foxtrot's unkempt manner of storytelling somewhat and stays on its feet long enough to keep you hooked. With three individual heroes across 400+ pages, it's almost unavoidable that the novel collapses on itself somewhat, but Whiskey Tango Foxtrot rarely lets up on its entertainment drive. Coupled with the growl of a Stooges album and the heaviness of a Nolan film, Whiskey Tango Foxtrot is a deliciously schizophrenic blast of a read, and it may take a while to catch fire, but when it does there's flames everywhere.

FRED MCNAMARA

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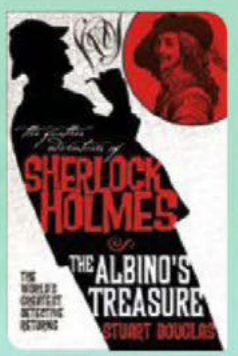

THE FURTHER ADVENTURES OF SHERLOCK HOLMES: THE ALBINO'S TREASURE

AUTHOR: STUART DOUGLAS
PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It is with pleasure that we take up our pens again to report on a new outing for the great detective. This one comes to us courtesy of Stuart Douglas, a man who has form in chronicling the adventures of Sherlock Holmes. In 2013, his story The Adventure of The Locked Carriage appeared in the Titan Books anthology Encounters Of Sherlock Holmes and is one of the few whose solutions we actually remember offhand (that is, without having to get up and walk all the way to the STARBURST bookshelf to look up the finer details).

Barring the somewhat cliché-ridden 'this tale was too sensational to be published at the time' introductory twaddle that we've come to expect of recent Holmes novels, Douglas weaves a clever and occasionally humorous scavenger hunt of a novel, and with so many characters in play you never know quite who to trust. Also, Fu Manchu (referred to here as the Lord of Strange Deaths) is a pivotal part of the story, so fans of that character will be pleased by his appearance here.

It's not perfectly told, sadly; characters turn up and announce their plans, meriting a hasty flick back through the pages to find out just who the hell they were. But when the plot becomes clear near the end, it makes total sense and the author thankfully didn't have to resort to too much exposition. Holmes does make a few missteps, but they are just as logical in their own way as the right answer turns out to be, as the errors in his thinking come about through making the most of the information that is available to him at the time.

If you're looking for an idea of what kind of Holmes story this is, think The Six Napoleons flavoured with a touch of The Musgrave Ritual and just a dash of National Treasure. We'll certainly be coming back to it for another go in our free time and are looking forward to Douglas' next outing.

SCOTT VARNHAM

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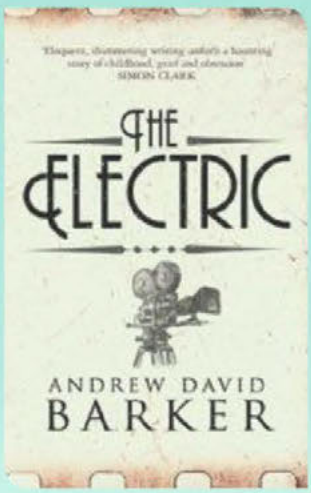

THE ELECTRIC

AUTHOR: ANDREW DAVID BARKER
PUBLISHER: BOO BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

With new genre novels coming out every week it can be very easy to miss something, especially if it's a debut novel produced by a small and independent publisher. The Electric is a case in point; a clever and heart-warming tale of the supernatural which may have passed you by, simply because you've never heard of the publisher or the author.

The plot follows a teenager called Sam Crowhurst, a young man on that delicate cusp between boyhood and being a grown-up. Thanks to a recent bereavement, his mind and soul are in a state of chaos, and it's only when he comes across a mysterious old cinema called 'The Electric' that he begins to face his own personal demons. He drags his two closest friends into the discovery, and between them they learn a lot about themselves and each other. The Electric is a tale of young love, loss, coming-of-age and, of course, ghosts. The cinema is haunted by movie-loving spooks, who happen to find most horror movies hilarious.

The Electric also happens to be a love letter to the cinema. A haunted movie theatre that shows features starring the ghosts of old movie stars is a perfect excuse to dive head-long into movie history and explore what makes the silver screen so special. The main protagonists are also movie fans, and this seems perfectly natural throughout the story. The flow of the story is one of its key stylistic features; the author builds gently on the reader's expectations, carefully building his world and characters throughout so nothing feels forced (and making the ending difficult to predict).

The Electric is an impressive first novel. Andrew David Barker's style is whimsical and nostalgic, and the work reads like the haziest recollections of a childhood long since gone. The pace is gentle and relaxed; there's very little foreshadowing here and not a great deal of depth. Instead, we get a strong ghost story with just enough surprises to keep the reader engaged throughout. The characters are firmly envisioned and it's easy to understand the dynamics between the three children.

ED FORTUNE

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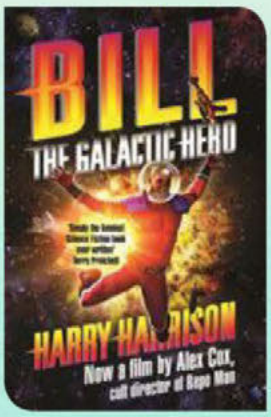

BILL, THE GALACTIC HERO

AUTHOR: HARRY HARRISON
PUBLISHER: GOLLANCZ
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Harry Harrison's classic story of the hilarious perils of deep space, Bill, the Galactic Hero, is reissued following its recent adaptation as an indie student film by director Alex Cox.

The story sees our hapless hero face countless perils, more than often resulting in hilarious atrocities; from that first unfortunate recruitment into the Space Troopers after being drugged and hypnotised, to a lost week spent on the planet Helior, more than often ending in disaster for Bill.

Bill dreamed of being a technical fertiliser operator, but Space Trooper officer Deathwish Drang has other plans for him, recruiting him for the endless fight against the Chingers.

After his unfortunate conscription, Bill tries to constantly avoid danger, but he more than often finds himself being thrown head first into it, and when he's not facing the towering lizard enemies in the form of the dreaded Chingers, or being unwillingly recruited as a spy, he's more than often finding himself being thrown into imminent danger and heroism. With each accidental feat of heroism more than often resulting in some of the most amusing mishaps that seem to be never ending, poor hapless Bill just can't catch a break, even when he's gifted with an extra right arm.

A hilarious read with a sinister streak and who's influence is still felt in science fiction today, from the humorous and more than often perilous adventures of Futurama's Fry and Bender, to the unfortunate and hilarious mishaps of Arthur Dent and Ford Prefect in The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, Bill, the Galactic Hero has helped to inspire countless others, bringing a touch of sinister hilarity to the science fiction genre.

Definitely worth a read if you've never picked it up before, and if you like your sci-fi with a pinch of sinister humour and satire then you'll certainly find it entertaining....

LEONA TURFORD

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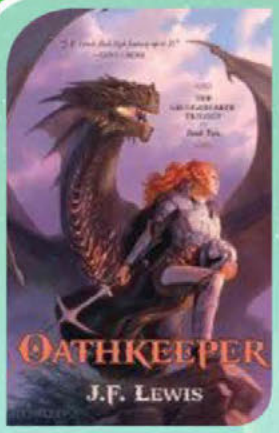

OATHKEEPER

AUTHOR: J.F. LEWIS
PUBLISHER: PYR/PROMETHEUS BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: JULY 9TH

Oathkeeper is an outstanding second instalment to this series, and continues to prove that this could be one of the most uniquely layered and complex universes since Frank Herbert's Dune. The world is one of sentient warsuits, cannibalistic offshoots of the elf species, ancient oaths and immortal societies. As the growing onslaught of the reptilian Zaur threatens all and ancient oaths drive the Aern to war, two princes initiate a desperate gambit to preserve their kingdom from the storm and enlist the help of new allies.

Easily the greatest strength of the book is the truly staggering detail and thought put into the world as a whole, with each culture and species varying wildly from any expected fantasy tropes, and instead taking on entirely new forms. The story here is one of complex political manoeuvring as it is war, with the very ambitions and acts to take the throne hitting just as hard as a full scale siege or armies annihilating one another. It builds a sense of grim atmosphere and a thread of surprising realism for all its otherworldliness. Combined with the thought behind the world's history, this assists in giving events far more grounding and substance.

The characters themselves also prove to be astoundingly diverse, the most prominent of whom retain a clear voice and arc despite the vast number of characters involved. While they can occasionally be hard to keep track of given the multiple threads, there is never a point where it's possible to start confusing one for the other. This is helped substantially by one of the better uses in recent years of having each figure effectively fulfil an archetype or representation of one aspect of their people.

The serious criticism to be made here is that it locks out new readers from the story. There's no real moment to truly get hold of what's happened beyond the blurb, and very little time to catch up. No sooner do you start the book, than the plot takes a dramatic turn with a crippling loss in Tranduvallu. It's a location of obvious importance and home to a major faction in this war, yet there's little opportunity to take in the unusual nature of its populace or role in the world before it is besieged. The story itself also rarely lets up, meaning that if you're confused or having difficulty in the opening chapters; it will not be any easier as you progress.

On the whole, Oathkeeper is hardly light reading material, but those seeking an incredibly detailed and sprawling fantasy saga would do extremely well to seek this one out.

CALLUM SHEPHARD

8

BEOWULF: A TRANSLATION AND COMMENTARY, TOGETHER WITH SELLIC SPELL

AUTHOR: J.R.R. TOLKIEN
EDITOR: CHRISTOPHER TOLKIEN
PUBLISHER: HARPERCOLLINS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

If we are to run with the school of thought which has it that The Hobbit and The Lord of the Rings trilogy form Tolkien's literary answer to the grand operatic bombast of Wagner's Ring Cycle, how did the maestro tune up? As his Germanic musical equal did across Das Rheingold (The Rhine Gold), Die Walküre (The Valkyrie), Siegfried and Götterdämmerung (Twilight of the Gods), the author turned to myth and legend. But here their paths would veer off - while Wagner took up his baton and delved into Norse myth of the sort which Tolkien would later be said to have been inspired by in telling his tales of Hobbits and all-powerful rings, first 'twas time for J.R.R. to let his mind drift off towards Olde England...

And though his translation of the epic Beowulf was finished by 1926, long before he ever thought to take a trip to Mount Doom, only now can we really analyse his treatment of it. If you've studied English and/or Classics, you may well know the basics. 3,182 lines of alliterative verse isn't the half of it, but it's a solid start. Scandinavia is the setting, the hero of the title proving himself quite handy at slaying things before a great dragon seeking to reclaim its treasure snuffs him out. Any similarity to The Hobbit is probably not entirely coincidental!

No prizes for guessing the source of Smaug's motivations. And indeed those of Fafner, the fire-breathing nasty from the earlier Siegfried. Strong men proving just how strong they are while travelling great distances? Piece of cake, whether on stage or paper - Christopher Tolkien's various annotations here lending his father's work something of the feel of a libretto. The dragon is but the final battle for Beowulf, the final act of his own saga. Grendel the troll is but the warm-up, and his mum also feels the sting of the blade.

Where Beowulf has Naegling as his stabby-stick of choice, Siegfried has Nothung. Neither seems to know the meaning of the word "fear" either. Far from being a ponderous exercise in classicism, the operatic analogy just might actually help the first-time reader of such material make sense of it all - split into easily digestible chunks or acts, the task of reading Beowulf surely becomes much less cumbersome than that of the man who translated it and evidently found it enough of a labour of love to return and liberally pinch ideas for his own later work.

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY

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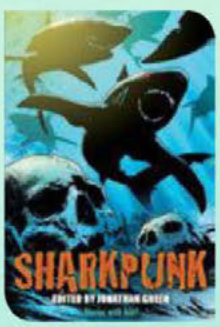

SHARKPUNK

EDITOR: JONATHAN GREEN
AUTHOR: VARIOUS
PUBLISHER: SNOWBOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Snowbook's latest anthology, SharkPunk, doesn't really create a new wave of shark-themed literature, but what it does do is bring together some very interesting talent to tell a whole bunch of stories about everybody's favourite villain of the seas.

The editor, Jonathan Green, has curated an interesting collection and has presented them in the best possible order; some of the tales are deep psychological horror, others are deeply silly parody. It takes a firm editorial hand and a keen understanding of the tone of each piece to make a collection this diverse work, and Green makes it look effortless.

The sharp-toothed festivities begin with Peter and the Invisible Shark by Jon Oliver, a tale that sets the tone for the collection; subtle menace, psychological horror and humour. Things get sillier with the fantasy comedy tale The Lickspittle Leviathan, which showcases author David Lee Stone quite well by cramming a complex yet interesting world into a very small space. Other highlights include Alec Worley's Sharkcop 2: Feeding Frenzy, a parody of the detective genre more than anything else. It's not all daft fun though; Den Patrick's Blood in the Water is a powerful tale of body horror and slow insanity, set in a world disturbingly close to our own. Similarly, Jenni Hill's The Serial Killer Who Thought She Was a Shark offers us an all too likely scenario that will send a sharp shiver down the spine. Robert Spalding's Rise of the Ubershark is the most cinematic of the lot; Pacific Rim meets Jaws. It's a great collection, and one that is a must for those who love the terrors of the deep.

ED FORTUNE

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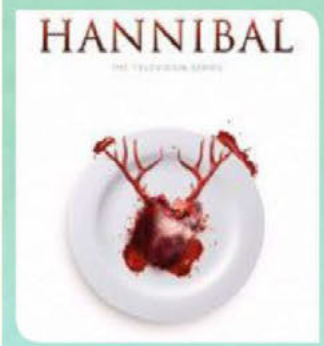

THE ART AND MAKING OF HANNIBAL: THE TV SERIES

AUTHOR: JESSE MCLEAN
PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

There have been times with Hannibal where it has been a victim of style over substance. That said though, when your style looks as good as it does in Hannibal, that isn't necessarily a bad thing. So with this in mind, it's with great anticipation that you pick up a copy of The Art and Making of Hannibal. The cover is wonderfully enticing; a clean white cover with a bloody heart on a plate. It's gruesome, classy and oddly beautiful to look at. It's a shame then that the actual content of the book is more "making of" than "art of".

For the most part, the "making of" stuff is a pretty standard affair, with behind the scenes photos and stills from episodes. All of them feel posed rather than like they have caught a candid on-set moment. This being a book about Hannibal, they don't shy away from the murders depicted in the series and fill the book with plenty of lingering shots on many of the series' more gory deaths.

Jesse McClean has put together a pretty comprehensive book on the making of the series, incorporating interviews with the cast and crew, profiles of the characters, set design maps and more. There are a couple of interesting bits about the series hidden in this, but the whole thing reads a little like a publicity interview for the series, rather than an in-depth making of.

That said, if you're a fan of just the series, this book probably has everything you could want and more. But for a fan of the franchise as a whole, the book barely acknowledges the previous movie adaptations of Thomas Harris' novels and it's an oversight that leaves one wanting more from the book. Admittedly it is probably unfair to knock a book about the Hannibal TV Series for not covering the previous films, but given the influence they have clearly had on elements of the series, it would've been nice to at least acknowledge them.

STUART MULRAIN

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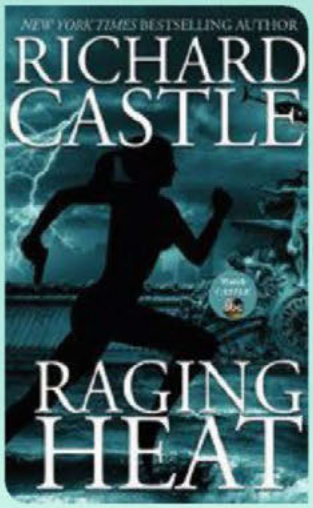

RAGING HEAT

AUTHOR: RICHARD CASTLE
PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Castle is a popular American police procedural drama, starring Nathan "Firefly" Fillion as a crime writer, which frequently features genre references and meta-humour. Part of the show's gimmick is that Castle uses his adventures with the New York Police Department as inspiration for his novels. Never one to miss a marketing opportunity, these books are ghost written and sold to eager fans. Raging Heat is the sixth such book (it even features a picture of Fillion on the back as Castle).

Raging Heat starts off like most good crime novels; with a dramatic and suspicious death. A Haitian immigrant is found dead in the planetarium and it seems he's been pushed from a passing plane. Once again, Detective Nikk Heat must team up with Pulitizer Prize-winning journalist Jameson Rook to fight crime and bring the killer to justice. Things go wrong when Heat and Rook disagree about the details of the case, and Rook becomes convinced that Heat has the wrong suspect in custody. In the background, a hurricane is about to hit New York.

If you've seen the TV show, you immediately (and correctly) assume that these are fictionalised versions of Richard Castle and Detective Kate Beckett. This helps with the book's immersion; you'll recognise most of the main cast very quickly and the author plays with your expectations a little. Those who haven't seen the show shouldn't worry, however, as the protagonists aren't terribly complex.

The book does things that the show could never do; for a start Rook does his own stunts and there is a very nicely done sex scene in the middle. In many ways, this is a by-the-numbers crime thriller. This makes sense as the character of Richard Castle is meant to be a very successful creator of airport thrillers (no one pretends that he's highbrow, except maybe Richard himself). It is a little too knowing in places; the ghostwriter knows that this is meant to be a bit cliché and can't resist playing around with this. But this is what makes it fun and even non-fans will get a sly laugh at some of the key scenes. If you're looking for steamy thriller for a long plane journey (and something to read casually whilst lazing in the sun) then this is ideal, especially if you're a fan of the show.

ED FORTUNE

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DESTINY QUEST: THE EYE OF WINTER'S FURY

AUTHOR: MICHAEL J WARD
PUBLISHER: GOLLANCZ
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

We often forget how short adventure game books are. The 'turn to page 400' format chops up the narrative in such a way that you're essentially getting a novella-length story surrounded by the trappings of a book. The Destiny Quest series breaks this mould by simply being huge in size, and using clever game design innovations to tell a neat interleaved narrative that is also a game.

The plot of Winter's Fury is the usual fantasy affair. You're a young and privileged prince, with access to resources that you can't use properly. The kingdom that is your home is plagued with monsters and evil that only you can deal with. The story is told through a series of modular adventures. Each is a short story in its own right, and you can choose to skip many of these quests if you so wish. Doing so risks missing out on valuable equipment, however. Some sections are mandatory, and they all stack up to tell a rather dark story with some brilliantly written set pieces.

One criticism of the book (and, in fact, the whole series) is the rather silly inclusion of a pack of evil magic users referred to as The Wiccans. The use of this term to describe supernatural monsters is pretty jarring. In the UK, Wicca is a recognised religion, and every time an attack by Wiccans in mentioned, it's impossible to picture them as anything else than a bunch of rather kind looking people with too much eyeliner, shiny jewellery and a preference for lentils. Apart from this, the monsters are pretty cool and the book features 'boss fight' sections that are splendid fun.

It is flawed in some key places. For a start, it has way too many little rules. Though old-fashioned gamers may delight in all the little extras, it makes the game unsuitable for low attention span-style casual play.

Overall, Destiny Quest: The Eye of Winter's Fury is a worthy addition to the growing range of adventure game books out there. Its heavily written style and dark tone make it a pleasing (if odd) mix, one that is not swiftly forgotten. We look forward to seeing what Mr Ward does next.

ED FORTUNE

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VIEW FROM THE WATCHTOWER

JOEL HARLEY PULLS MONITOR DUTY TO BRING YOU THE LATEST FROM THE WORLD OF COMIC BOOKS

Hello and welcome, true believers and faithful alike, to yet another month's edition of **View From the Watchtower**, and our look at the assorted comic book news therein, big, small and in-between. Here's hoping, though, that we can do so without too much interference from that pesky Archie Andrews fellow from Riverdale (see previous issues... *far too many* previous issues). Hold fast, folks, it's going to be an Earth-shattering one...

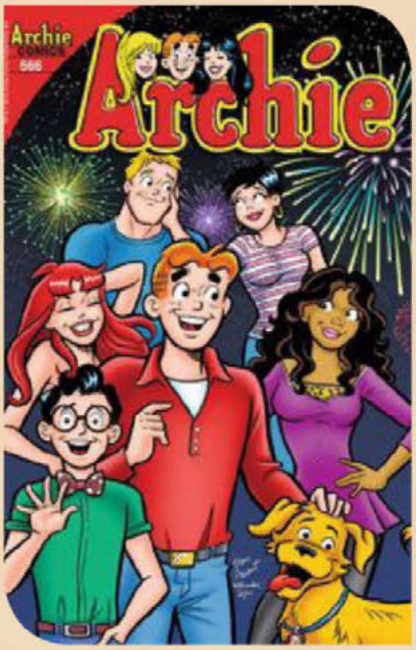
The big news for June relates to a story that's been brewing for several months – Marvel Comics' *Secret Wars* and their Battleworld(s). Readers (both of the **Watchtower** and Marvel itself) will have seen a resurgence of old titles and ideas (oh, hi Old Man Logan!) and boundaries crashing between Universes (hi, Miles Morales!), while the House of Ideas teases the 'end' of it all. And, as the Marvel Universe ends (it doesn't though), so it will be reborn again in the form of the 'All-New, All-Different Marvel Universe!'

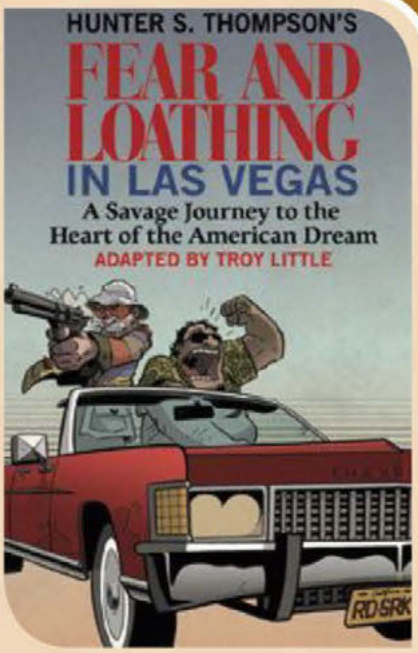
What does that mean for us, Marvel fans and lay-readers alike? Well, their entire lines will be relaunched at Issue One, with writers apparently under the edict of opening with potentially life-shattering changes for the hero(es) involved. Breathe easy - it's not a New 52-style reboot, then, but Editor-in-Chief Axel Alonso did clarify during an interview: "*We chose all of our creators to come in with a hook – a big thing has happened that changes the status quo of the character.*" Among said rumoured changes are the return of Wolverine (gasp) and a set-to-be-controversial 'new' Hulk (possibly Ultimate Reed Richards). This comes accompanied by some shiny new pieces of art by David Marquez and Matt Wilson, depicting some of the visual changes we can expect from the 'All-New, All-Different Marvel Universe.' This includes The Thing and Rocket Raccoon, wearing matching Guardians team uniforms (furthering suggestions that Marvel are phasing out the Fantastic Four and X-Men, instead dropping their key members into new teams and none-titled books), a few Inhumans (the FF and the X-Men's would-be replacements), Daredevil in his snazzy new black and red costume (no doubt inspired by his look in the Netflix series), X-23 as Wolverine, and Old Man Logan (presumably surviving Battleworld in order to head to the mainstream). You'll also see Jane Foster Thor, old man Steve Rogers, the visually unchanged Spidey, and Iron Man – just, presumably, to reassure fans that it hasn't changed *too* much.

We'll have more on this one as it unfolds, before the 'All-New, All-Different Marvel Universe' strikes in autumn. Fair play to Marvel, but 'New 52' is much easier to type.

The Marvel Universe isn't the only one coming to a close this year. No, everyone's favourite all-American teenager will be finishing up with issue *#666* of *Archie.* Wait, what? Ah, damn, here we go again. This July, *Archie* will relaunch at Issue #1, rebooted for a new era. *Archie #666* will celebrate everything which has gone before and that which is to come, accompanied by six (!) variant covers, enough to cheer the Archie obsessive in your life. Honestly, where's the Punisher when you need him?

Right, now that we've gotten that out of the way: with the New 52 finally on the back-burner, DC have unveiled their *DC You* promotion, which hopes to engage readers new and lapsed with a number of jumping-on points, bringing in several relaunches and new titles; once again





aiming to change the face and future of DC. You know, for the better, this time.

Such changes include a gritty new *Green Arrow* book, spearheaded by novelist Benjamin Percy (alleged to have a 'horror' hook), the new adventures of new Batman (Commissioner Gordon!), and John Romita Jr's Superman wearing a black-shield t-shirt and dodgy hair. This also heralds books for Starfire, Bizarro, Midnighter and an army of Robins. Also, Cyborg gets new powers. Hopefully a personality, too (see *Cyborg #1*, July 22nd).

DC You is rolling out this month, the appropriate press bumpf reading as such: "*The new DC Universe represents a bold new direction from DC Entertainment, featuring a more expansive and modern line of comic books that still honours our rich legacy of storytelling. Whether you've been a DC fan your whole life, or are just getting started with the world of comics, there's a story just for you! And it all starts right here, right now, with DC You!*" Sounds good, but they missed a trick, not calling it the DC You-niverse.

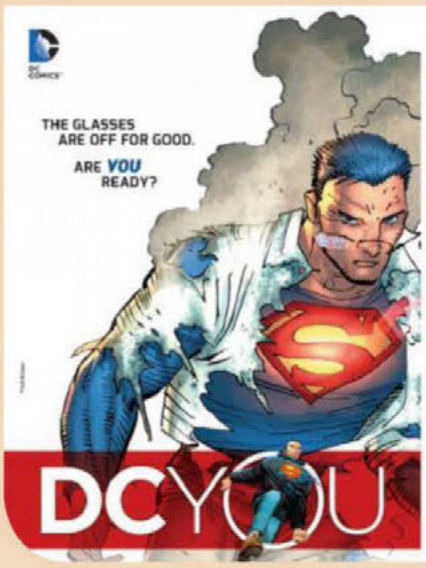
At the other end of the comic book spectrum (the literary one), this year will see the adaptation of Hunter S. Thompson's *Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas*. It'll be published by IDW comics and adapted by Troy Little - also known for his work on, um, *The Powerpuff Girls*.

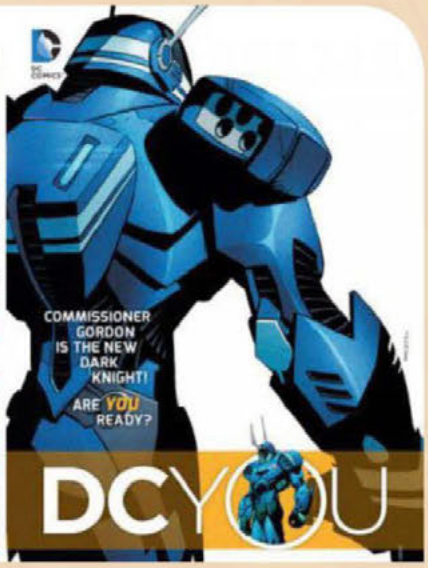
And finally, the news that Internet meme and actual personality Grumpy Cat will be getting her own comic book. You know, in case the myriad of photos of the creature already available online weren't enough to satiate one's needs. *The Misadventures of Grumpy Cat* will be a thing you can legally buy in shops this autumn, from Dynamite Comics, in three-issue miniseries form. If you can't wait for that, well, Garfield has been doing it for years. The up-side to this being that, as Dynamite Comics are the folk doing the publishing, it can only be a matter of time before we see an *Army of Darkness vs. Grumpy Cat* crossover hit the stands.

And so we close yet another edition of **View from the Watchtower**, comic book universes crashing down around us, from Marvel to DC through to Archie and, ultimately our very own... presuming, of course, we choose to take *The Misadventures of Grumpy Cat* as the harbinger of the apocalypse that it so definitely is.

If you have time to, before then, I can be reached at the usual Twitter and e-mail avenues, where you can tell me all about which all-new, all-different DC and Marvel books you'll be adding to your longbox. As long as none of them are *The Misadventures of Grumpy Cat,* that is. To quote the mighty Tard herself... '*NO*'.

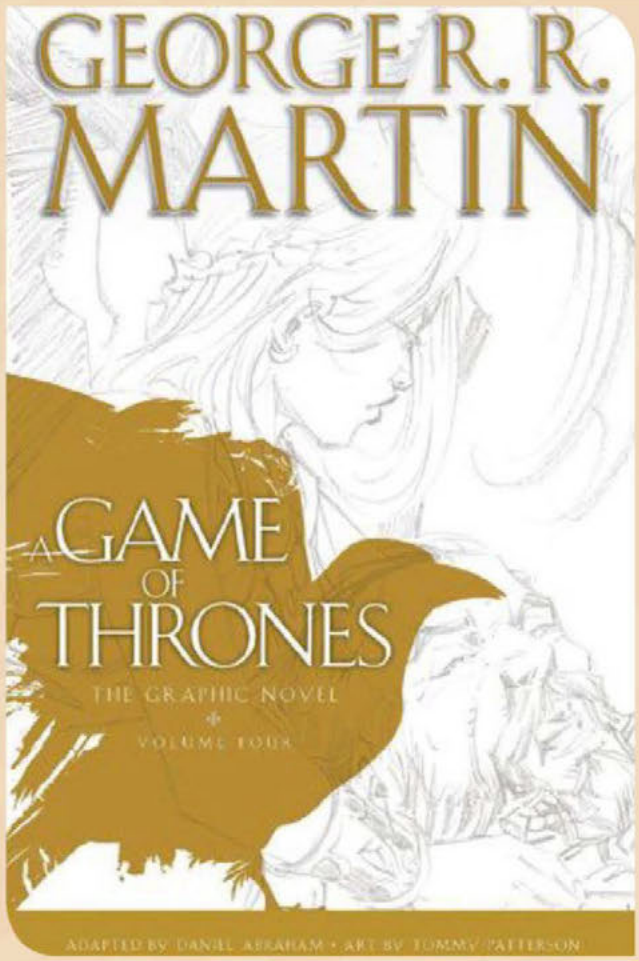
Joel Harley can be contacted at:
joel.harley@starburstmagazine.com
and tweeted **@joelharley**





REVIEWS

THE LATEST COMIC BOOK RELEASES REVIEWED AND RATED



A GAME OF THRONES: THE GRAPHIC NOVEL VOLUME 4

AUTHOR: GEORGE R.R. MARTIN, DANIEL ABRAHAM / ARTIST: TOMMY PATTERSON / PUBLISHER: HARPER VOYAGER / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The fourth instalment of this graphic novel adaptation deals with roughly the final quarter and notably the dramatic climax of its source material, A Game of Thrones. Tyrion, having escaped the Eyrie, leads a tribe of clansmen to reconvene with his father who is plotting to repel the North. Lord Eddard Stark is wrongfully being held captive in King's Landing after learning the hard way that there is no honour in politics, whilst his eldest son Robb Stark is leading an army south in response. At the wall, Jon Snow is adjusting to the harsh realities of a life in the Night's Watch, and across the Narrow Sea, Daenerys Targaryen, now at the head of a mighty Khalasar, plots her return to Westeros.

Adapting a novel with the sheer breadth and narrative depth of Martin's was never going to be an easy task but with this concluding volume, Abraham and Patterson have proven worthy. The virulent book vs. show debate will rage on forever more but this graphic novel thankfully has elements that will appeal to fighters in either corner of the debate. Tommy Patterson's character depictions are clearly influenced by the HBO show and this provides familiarity for people alien to the books, plus the pace of a paneled comic flows more progressively than an 864-page epic novel.

On the other hand, the artistic freedom of an illustrated series gives the graphic novel an opportunity to stick faithfully to the material and please book purists. We actually get to see the Battle of the Green Fork. Tyrion has his famous heterochromia. Dreams can be illustrated in all their prophetic glory, and the ironic throne is a bloody towering and ominous presence, not just a few swords glued together. Perhaps the greatest achievement of this adaptation lies in its accessibility and appeal to all manner of fans, casual or obsessive.

The artwork throughout is honestly quite striking; a fully realised colour palette means that each page is vibrant and alluring. The only minor issue here is that Tommy Patterson's art is so vivid that at points it almost negates the grittiness of certain parts of the story. Ultimately though, this proves to be a marginal flaw as the book is thoroughly enjoyable and engaging thanks to its own stylistic propensities. With this concluding chapter, Martin's series has successfully been executed in a new medium and this reflects both the brilliance of Martin's tale and the talents of Abraham and Patterson for delivering it. Roll on A Clash of Kings...

FORD MADDOX BROWN

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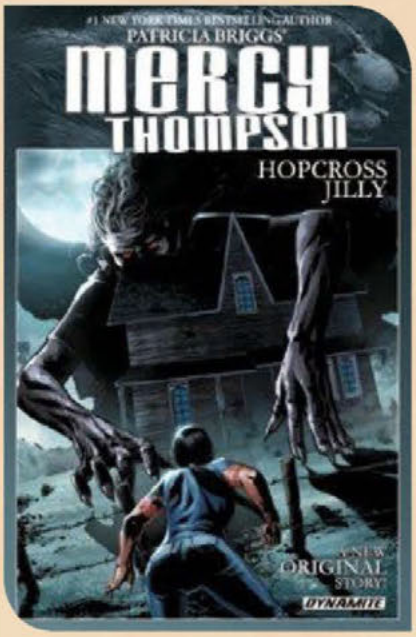

MERCY THOMPSON: HOPCROSS JILLY

WRITER: PATRICIA BRIGGS, RIK HOSKIN / ARTIST: TOM GARCIA / PUBLISHER: DYNAMITE / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 30TH

Dynamite is the home of urban fantasy authors putting their pens to comics, with Jim Butcher and Charlaine Harris both making regular contributions. Hopcross Jilly marks another foray into sequential art for supernatural romance scribe Patricia Briggs with an all-new, canonical story. The events occur between the latest two novels (Frost Burned and Night Broken) and just after the events in Dead Heart (Alpha and Omega #4). Mercy Thompson, mechanic, shape-shifting coyote and honorary member of the Tri-Cities werewolf pack, has her work cut out for her after discovering a series of cold case killings and sparking a murder mystery, magical whodunit.

Briggs is one of the more affluent voices of the quagmire of supernatural romance stories, and she demonstrates her flair for the written word in abundance. But she's a novelist first and foremost and it shows. Block text and bloated speech blot the page, often negating the art and reading like a rearranged novel rather than a comic. Co-writer Rik Hoskin could have reined it in a bit for greater effect.

Artist Tom Garcia complemented the lilt of 2013's Hellraiser: The Dark Watch, but his work here seems lacking and lost amongst many similar artists on Dynamite's payroll. But he does pay attention to the Gothic tropes of the story and peppers it with just the right amount of shadows, fangs and red eyes.

The high school setting is a well tapped location that's long since dried, and it's no different here. Mercy's stepdaughter Jesse is bullied because her werewolf father Adam has gone public. It isn't until she's at the mall, at home or in the car wash (you'll have to read it) that she's suddenly a character worth caring about.

With pleasing pop culture references, an intriguing domestic setting and fun use of magic, it makes up for the more archetypical characters and predictable plot turns. It has the strength of the novels on its side and the art brings Brigg's beloved characters alive, so fans will delight. Everyone else can do better for horror or family drama, but it's not a bad read to pass the time.

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

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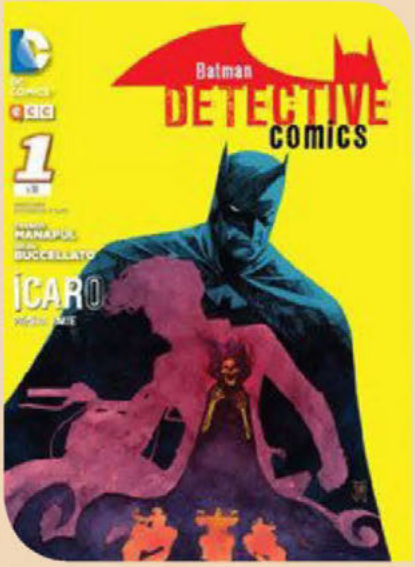

BATMAN – DETECTIVE COMICS VOLUME 6: ICARUS

WRITER: BRIAN BUCCELLATO, FRANCIS MANAPUL / ARTIST: WERTHER DELL'EDERA, SCOTT HEPBURN, FRANCIS MANAPUL / PUBLISHER: DC COMICS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

DC comics have been all about the Batman in recent years, and this over-saturation has caused the iconic Dark Knight detective to become rather bland. When you have a vast cast of hangers-on in your story, it's hard to have any memorable moments or shifts in character. Icarus sees a new team pare Batman back to basics; this is a story about Batman solving crimes and punching villains, and little else.

Buccellato and Manapul change the tone of the series by focusing on the things that make a Gotham story work: corruption and murder. The plot brings back the deadly drug Icarus, a substance that causes spontaneous combustion upon overdose. A drug that took out Detective Bullock's partner, and one that Gotham PD and Batman had thought had been banished from the streets of Gotham for good. A conflict between Bullock and the Bat becomes inevitable, and in the meantime the city streets are literally burning. Expect more than the usual violence and plenty of twists and turns.

The art also departs from the regular DC Comics' style. It's darker in tone and denser. The artists' vision of Gotham is a city where it is always raining and the sun is nothing but a distant memory. It's so grimy and dark that you half expect the pages to stain your hands, though the art is never unclear and everything is well defined. Those who prefer their superheroes blocky and chunky will be delighted and though it isn't exactly pretty, it's very atmospheric.

Icarus is a classic Batman story. It cherry picks some of the moodier ideas from '70s, '80s and '90s incarnations of the character to produce something unique. Though the narrative is a little cluttered in places (and the Bruce Wayne B-story is overplayed), it's a solid and much welcome addition to a growing library of well thought-out crime dramas that just happen to be set in a world with super humans in it.

ED FORTUNE

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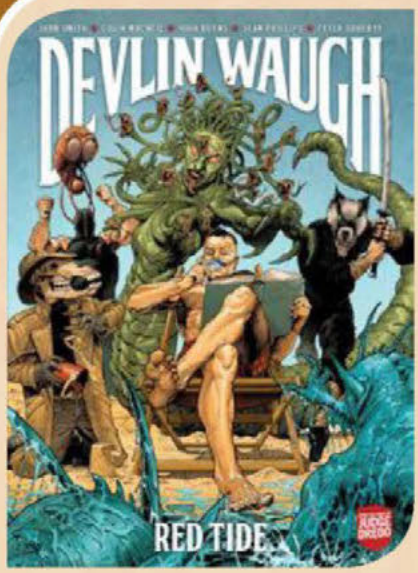

DEVLIN WAUGH: RED TIDE

WRITER: JOHN SMITH / ARTWORK: SEAN PHILLIPS, COLIN MACNEIL, JOHN BURNS, PETER DOHERTY / PUBLISHER: 2000 AD / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Devlin Waugh first graced the pages of the Judge Dredd Megazine in 1992, and proved to be an instant hit with readers, making him the only character to have knocked Dredd himself from the pedestal of 'Favourite Strip'. Depending on your point of view, the camp homosexual exorcist priest was the unique breed of hero the comics industry needed at the time, or a pithy pastiche of Noel Coward and Arnold Schwarzenegger, played entirely for laughs and attention.

This latest Red Tide trade paperback collects the final half of Devlin's run, all written by creator John Smith. After being bitten by vampires, our hero is a shadow of his former self, and it takes the titular story for him to get back to true form as he wisecracks and karate chops his way through the undead. It's an action-packed story, the heroes moving swiftly to the next encounter, although slightly too long in its collected form. Fight follows fight follows fight; in monthly episodes it worked well, but here it feels there's too much of the same happening in different locations. A twist at the end makes all this forgivable, though, as does Devlin's banter throughout.

The other stories contained in these 200-plus pages are of equally high quality. Vile Bodies is a hilarious re-introduction to Devlin, filled with outrageous art and one-liners, although it sits jarringly between Red Tide's prologue and main story. Devlin leaves centre stage in Bite Fight, as focus shifts to an undercover Judge, reminding the reader of Waugh's place within the Dredd world; art by John Burns harks back to the early annuals, imbuing a warm sense of nostalgia to the tale. All Hell is a Dante-esque team-up with a twist while Innocence and Experience supplies an origin story managing to be amusing, shocking and surprisingly poignant.

The prose story Body and Soul, a cover gallery and sample pages from Jock all complete this solid package, one that will delight not only Devlin Waugh's fans but also those who had forgotten what a breath of fresh air the character proved to be, and still is after over two decades.

ALISTER DAVISON

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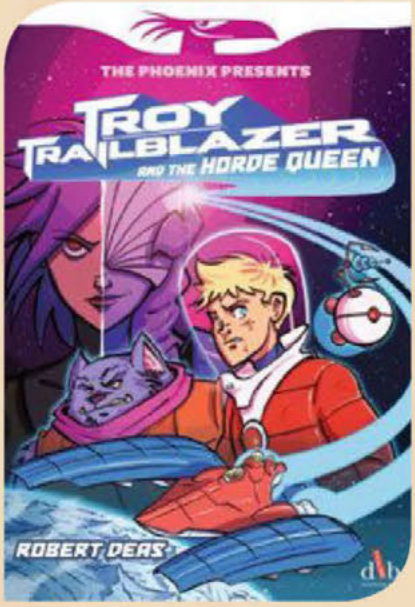

TROY TRAILBLAZER AND THE HORDE QUEEN

WRITER & ARTIST: ROBERT DEAS / PUBLISHER: DAVID FICKLING / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

If you're a parent who loves sci-fi or films like Alien, Guardians of the Galaxy, The Thing, or Star Wars, then Troy Trailblazer is the gateway drug that you need to inspire a similar passion in your children.

Part of the Phoenix Presents line of books that collect comic strips from the amazing weekly comic The Phoenix, Troy Trailblazer and the Horde Queen is a fantastically vibrant collection. Suitable for all ages but surprisingly dark in places, this is creator Robert Deas' finest work to date.

Space adventurers Troy and Jess, along with furry friend Barrus and robot Blip, read like Indiana Jones meets Han and Chewbacca, a mismatched group of star travellers that reclaim space relics from the wrong hands and try to put them back where they belong.

We use a lot of comparisons when talking about Troy Trailblazer because it is a derivative work, but it takes the best parts from the Alien series of films, merges them with the time travelling of Doctor Who and comes up with something that is pitched perfectly for children. That's a very special talent and serves as a fantastic introduction to some of the concepts that older sci-fi fans take for granted.

This particular writer's 6 and 4-year-old children were much more enthralled than me with the earliest Troy Trailblazer Phoenix strips. There was something very safe about the strip in the past that appealed to children, but not to me. The story collected in the Horde Queen book, however, is much more layered than any of the strips that came before it, and doesn't talk down to the reader at all. This is light years ahead of those early strips and we can't wait to read whatever adventure comes next.

Troy Traliblazer and the Horde Queen is a nuanced, gorgeously coloured and illustrated, fast-paced adventure, exploring themes of friendship, responsibility, consequence and ray-guns. If you're a regular STARBURST reader AND parent, you probably need this book in your life.

P.M. BUCHAN

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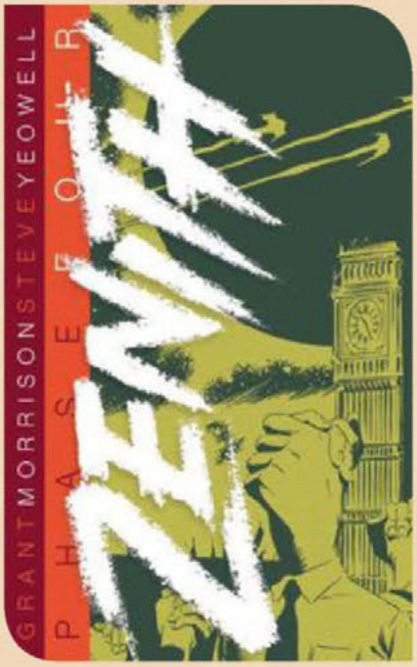

ZENITH PHASE 4

WRITER: GRANT MORRISON / ARTIST: STEVE YEOWELL / PUBLISHER: 2000 AD / RELEASE DATE: JULY 16TH

With Zenith Phase Four, we now have the whole of this story of superheroes and monsters available for the first time. Grant Morrison wrote Zenith Phase Four for publication in 2000 AD #791-806, available in 1992. Due to some complications over legal rights, this is the first time they have been collected together. The graphic novel also includes the short piece zzzzenith.com first published in 2000 AD #2001 (from 2000). As with the first three phases, Steve Yeowell did the artwork.

The main story is collected in over 80 pages of full colour and charts the story of the final battle with the multi-dimensional Lloigor. For the bulk of this story, all seems doomed as superhero rock-star Zenith and St. John (politician/superhero/hippy) struggle to overcome the alien superbeings despite their best efforts. Dr. Michael Peyne describes events in flashback and we learn he is the last man alive on an Earth being transformed by the Lloigor ahead of their final transcendence. As the pages turn, we learn of the destruction of humanity, the dark secret of the Lloigor's creation and the deaths of Zenith and St John. We also watch as Dr. Peyne gets younger and younger, his reward for creating the superheroes in his genetic experiments during World War II.

When the finale comes it is, as ever, down to St. John who has really been the central character of the narrative in almost all the Zenith stories. The titular character is someone the story happens near rather than to; although this is a step up from Phase Three, it still lacks any substantial contribution from Zenith himself.

As a whole, this makes a fitting conclusion to the series and readers who missed the original comic release will enjoy the chance to see Zenith in full-colour glory.

TONY JONES

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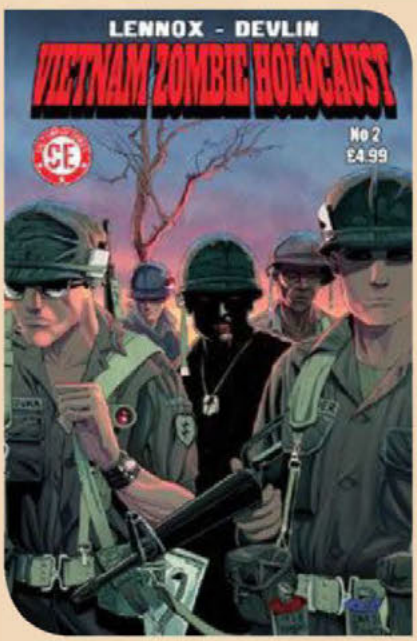

VIETNAM ZOMBIE HOLOCAUST #2

WRITER: GEORGE LENNOX / ARTIST: JAMES DEVLIN / PUBLISHER: CULT EMPIRE COMICS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Issue 2 of Vietnam Zombie Holocaust picks up where the first left off and continues in exactly the same way, with the hero platoon battling groups of marauding undead in increasing frustration at not knowing what the hell is going on. The blackly humorous tone is kept up, with lines like "We've been ambushed a few times – first by a donkey, then through the night by dead farmers" delivered utterly straight, while the grim determination of the soldiers to make it through the chaos alive is evident in their every facial expression.

The comic doesn't ignore the human side of war, or more specifically the dehumanising aspect of it, and acknowledges both the fact that soldiers are often forced to do awful things in order to just survive and the constant exposure to the horrors of death having a detrimental effect on your sanity, ever-growing army of undead or not. A zombie baby suckling on its dead mother's breast is not something you forget in a hurry.

The artwork continues to impress, capturing the tropical heat of outdoor expeditions, the windowless isolation of secret laboratories and the cramped claustrophobia of underground tunnels. A memorable sequence juxtaposes some bloody zombie carnage with several bright and colourful panels featuring a troop concert with a country singer and a couple of busty backups, and one glorious page sees a zombie soldier with a necklace of ears crawling out of a muddy hole in torrential rain while jagged flashes of lightning illuminate the night sky behind him.

As present characters begin to fall one by one when the zombie virus takes over, a few new ones are introduced, such as a one-man army Special Forces soldier who appears to be played by Chuck Norris, while the final panel promises even greater violent madness to come.

ANDREW MARSHALL

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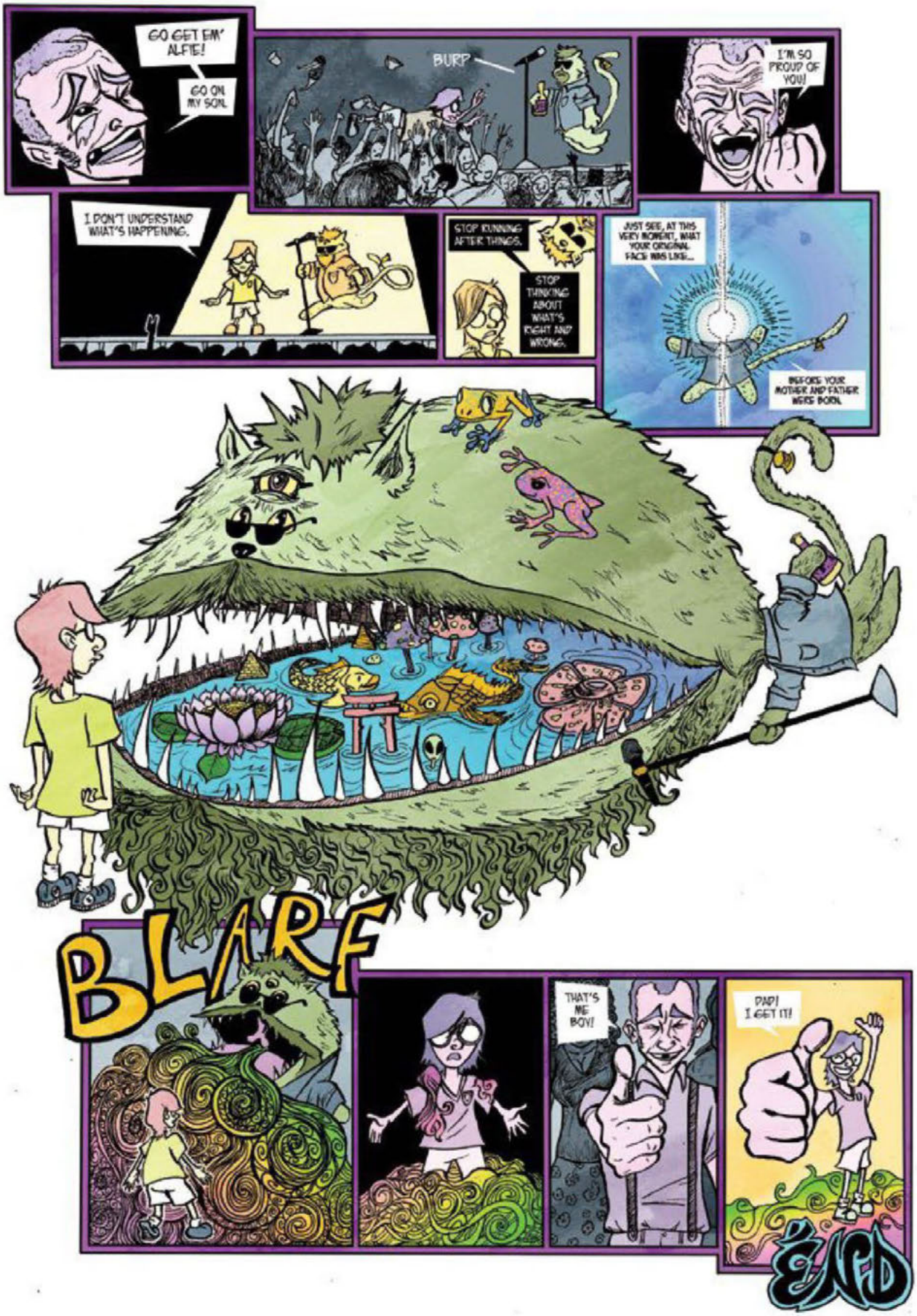
WORLD TOUR
SOLD OUT
I REMEMBER WHEN ME OLD MAN TOOK ME TO SEE JENKINS FOR THE FIRST TIME BACK IN '76.
YOU'RE IN FOR A PROPER TREAT TONIGHT ALFIE.
KITTY JENKINS
STREAMS OF PISSKEY
BY DANIEL DE SOSA
HE'S FOUR HOURS LATE DAD.
NO ONE CARES, SON.
OLD K-JENKS IS A LEGEND.
ARE YEH PISSIN TRAMPS FEELING FRISKY?
GET YER FOURTH EYES OPEN.
THIS HERE'S A BRAND NEW ONE.
POOOT
ISN'T THIS GREAT, ALFIE?
I DON'T GET IT.
THIS ONE GOES OUT TO THAT LITTLE SPECCY GINGER PRICK WHO DOESN'T GET IT.
BRING HIM ON STAGE.


GO GET 'EM' ALFIE!
GO ON, MY SON.
BURP
I'M SO PROUD OF YOU!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT'S HAPPENING.
STOP RUNNING AFTER THINGS.
STOP THINKING ABOUT WHAT'S RIGHT AND WRONG.
JUST SEE, AT THIS VERY MOMENT, WHAT YOUR ORIGINAL FACE WAS LIKE...
BEFORE YOUR MOTHER AND FATHER WERE BORN.
BLARF
THAT'S ME BOY!
DAD! I GET IT!
END

ANIME-NATION

A MONTHLY ROUND UP FROM THE WORLD OF ANIME AND MANGA WITH DOMINIC CUTHBERT

IN THIS CORNER OF THE WORLD Crowdfunding Success

By the time you read this, the crowdfunding for an anime adaption of Fumiyo Kōno's award-winning World War II manga, **In This Corner of the World**, will have concluded to a roaring success. Despite reaching its goal of 20 million yen (£110,000 approx.) fans went above and beyond, reaching 150% of its initial margin. The film will be written and directed by **Black Lagoon**'s Sunao Katabuchi for a 2016 release.

Second Movie for FAIRY TAIL Franchise Greenlit

Amidst **Fairy Tail**'s many permutations and spin-offs, including the upcoming OVA, and the first film, Phoenix Princess in 2012, comes the announcement of a second feature-length. A teaser image has been released showing off the dragon slayer Natsu Dragneel half-transformed, sparking plenty of fan theories and excitement. Instead of the one-shot approach most anime movies adopt, the film looks set to have a direct impact on events of the main series. Manga creator Hiro Mashima will be involved in production, but as of yet, no release date has been confirmed.

First New DRAGON BALL Series in 18 Years

Arguably the most popular and recognisable anime, the new series will follow Earth's tenuous peace in the fallout after Goku's immense fight with Majin Buu. **Dragon Ball Super** will be overseen by series creator Akira Toriyama and produced with Fuji Television, promising 'a bold, new universe welcoming to fans and endearing to new viewers'. With hints of a brand new villain, and a companion manga set to print in August, you won't want to miss out. The series is set to debut in July in Japan for a 100-episode run. A simulcast for UK and US audiences is expected.

Final NARUTO Manga

Alongside plans to bring series creator Masashi Kishimoto to this year's New York Comic Con, publisher Viz has announced that the 72nd and final volume in the long-running **Naruto** manga series will be available in print and digitally on October 6th. Viz has also revealed three prose novels: **Kakashi's Story** in November, followed by **Shikamaru's Story** in February 2016 and then **Sakura's Story** in May.

MAD MAX Anime

With the phenomenal success of **Mad Max: Fury Road**, it might surprise some to discover the fourth entry in the franchise was originally intended as an anime. Although it didn't come to fruition due to various setbacks, series creator George Miller has revealed that there's still a script. But since the next in the franchise has already been given a title, it's unlikely we'll see an anime Australian wasteland any time soon.

Marvel Manga Variants

Marvel's solicitation material for August has some tantalising treats for manga fans. Over 20 upcoming issues will be available with special manga variant covers, though artist credits are still unconfirmed (as of going to print). Comics involved include **Silk**, **Ms Marvel**, **House of M** and many more besides.

MY LOVE STORY!! Live Action Adaptation

One of the more popular series of the spring season is romantic comedy **My Love Story!!** (Ore Monogatari). Although the series hasn't yet finished its 24-episode run, a live action movie has been announced. The series subverted traditional genre tropes as well as ideas of masculinity, courting both awards and acclaim. 32-year-old Japanese actor Ryôhei Suzuki has been cast as 15-year-old Takeo. But if you ask us, he isn't nearly big and gruff enough.

THE LATEST RELEASES REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS

NADIA: THE SECRET OF THE BLUE WATER – COMPLETE COLLECTION

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: NORIKA HIDAKA, KENYUU HORIUCH, YOSHINO TAKAMORI, AKIO ŌTSUKA, MEG BAUMAN, EV LUNNING, NATHAN PARSONS / RELEASE DATE: JUNE 22ND

Perhaps more than any other series, Nadia has a perfect pedigree, based on a short story by Hayao Miyazaki, itself very loosely based on Jules Verne 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, and co-directed by Neon Genesis Evangelion mastermind Hideaki Anno. It uses the Verne story as a springboard to tell the tale of an alternate 1889, where Gargoyle, a sinister and industrious villain, strives to restore the Atlantean empire to dominance over humanity.

Jean Ratlique is a gifted and goofy whiz kid, tinkering at inventions which all inevitable fail. After saving circus performer Nadia from testy red head Senorita Grandis Granva and her two goons, the inventor Hanson and dandy Sanson, they go on a long mysterious journey to uncover the secret of the strange blue gem that hangs around Nadia's neck: the blue water. Orbiting the centre of their journey is Captain Nemo and his submarine The Nautilus, making for a vivid take on the source material.

The animation is very in keeping with the Studio Ghibli style. It might not be up to the same scrupulous standard, and the quality does fluctuate throughout, but there is an acute attention to detail, especially given the impressive roster of machinery and the scope of the story's ambition.

Alternating between dubs is a good idea, and gives you an insight into western attitudes to anime at the time. Many of the English voices either don't fit their characters or mewl through terrible French accents. But other performances including Nadia (Bauman) and Nemo (Lunning) are fairly strong. To get the most out of the series, stick to the Japanese dub. But in whatever language, the soundtrack is superb and energetic, utilising cool jazz pieces, ominous synth and playful, jangly pop ballads.

Episode 22, Electra the Traitor, is the series highlight; a gut-wrenching and emotionally-charged peak. While the plot twists are easy to predict, it doesn't soften their impact. But Nadia is a series of halves, and after this highpoint the character development wanes, the plot loses steam and the filler sets in. Episode 34, My Darling Nadia, is the dull apotheosis, made up of clip shows and musical numbers. It isn't until the next episode that things start to pick up again. Once back on top form, it makes for a resonating and satisfying end. With some serious cuts, it could well be one of the greats.

Nadia: The Secret of the Blue Water, like Neon Genesis Evangelion, is about adolescence and adulthood, the gulf between and the transition from one to the other. It chronicles the friction between science and nature, of technology and faith in a hugely influential, effortlessly funny series, with archetype setting and dynamic characters on a memorable and poignant journey. It's a near essential series that frequently goes unexpected places, taking a genuine intellectual look at ethics and philosophy. While the lack of real extras might make the £50 price tag steep, it's a must have.

Extras: *Opening and closing animation / TV spot / Trailers*

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

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THE FAMILIAR OF ZERO: SEASON 2

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: YU KO / SCREENPLAY: YUJI KAWAHARA / STARRING: RIE KUGIMIYA, SATOSHI HINO, MICHIKO NEYA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Based on the light novels by Noboru Yamaguchi and left unfished due to his death, Familiar of Zero was originally serialised in anime form as far back as 2006. Since then there've been four series and one OVA episode. But having seen the first series makes little difference to watching the second, with more than enough exposition to bridge the gap.

Nicknamed 'Zero Louise', a young noble girl is teased for her shoddy use of magic at Tristain Academy. During a class ceremony to summon their familiars, Louise summons Saito Hiraga, a boob-obsessed high school student. Saito, motivated by tit size, finds himself the centre of plenty of attention and echhi enabling plot devices. Big boobs and panties might be the be all and end all for Saito, and the lynchpin for all the comedy, but it doesn't approach it a playful or inventive way like this year's Punch Line.

The series functions in much the same way as the high-schooler-trapped-in-video game or sent back in time tropes. While it's a fictional kingdom, it's largely based on a warring Europe and the settings are lavishly rendered and cunningly brought to life. The cutesy character models aren't without merit and the fight sequences are enjoyable. Though none of it leaves a particularly deep impression.

With the rule of three episodes (where you reserve judgement until viewing the first three episodes) it passes . . . barely. It's not without style and some impressive visuals, mostly of the glowing twin moons themselves, and not without genuinely tender moments. There's redemption in endings, and the series closer, The Farewell Wedding Ceremony, makes finishing the series worth it.

Extras: *Trailers / Opening and closing animation*

DOMINIC CUTHBERT

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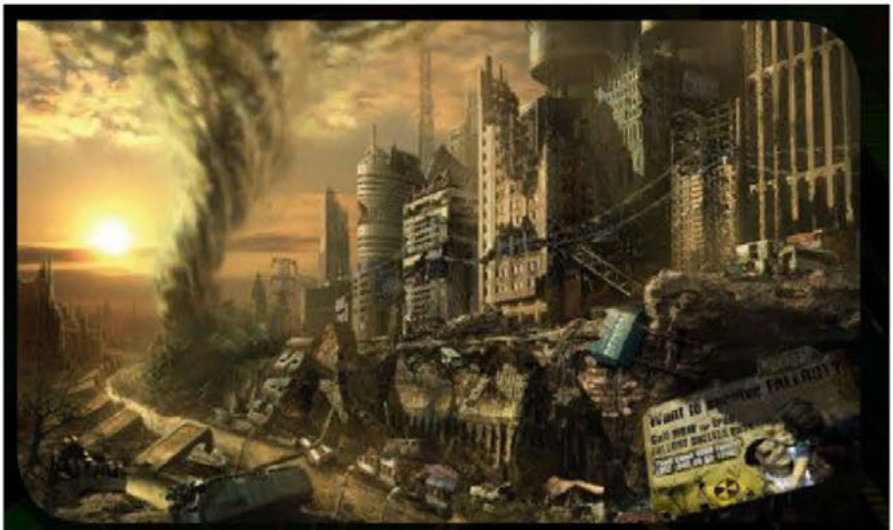
PIXEL JUICE

NEWS AND PREVIEWS IN GAMING BY LEE PRICE



FALLOUT 4 Officially Announced

It has been about seven years since **Fallout 3** blew gamers away, and ever since then we have been itching to get our hands on a sequel. Sure, we had New Vegas to plug the gap but that was more of an update than a full sequel, even if it was set in a new state.

However, finally, **Fallout 4** is official. The announcement was made with a trailer on the Bethesda website and the game looks absolutely stunning if that little snippet is anything to go by.

We don't know much yet, other than it looks like it is set in Boston and will be available for the PS4, Xbox One and PC, but you have to imagine that plenty more details will be forthcoming during E3.

COMING SOON

UNTIL DAWN

PLATFORM: PS4

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 28TH

Now this one sounds interesting. With a decent voice cast headed up by Hayden Panettiere and the promise that the game has to be played through multiple times to figure out what's actually going on, it seems like Until Dawn may offer something a little different to the standard current-gen fare. The developers are also promising a 'Butterfly Effect' dealie of sorts, wherein the actions of the player in one playthrough of the game will affect later plays. Whether this is an integral part of gameplay or just means that items will be missing if picked up in previous plays is yet to be seen.

COMING SOON

LOST DIMENSION

PLATFORM: PS3, VITA

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 28TH

These days, it seems like barely a month goes by where a game made by Atlus doesn't get a mention in these pages. Lost Dimension is another role playing game from the company, with some comparing it to the excellent Valkyria Chronicles. What is known is that it was pretty well received in its native Japan when it was released about a year ago and it has a branching storyline that you can affect, based on the characters that you choose. Should be worth a look if it's your sort of thing.

Microsoft WON'T Be Buying SILENT HILLS

Somehow a rumour got started in the middle of May that suggested that Konami were not only practically done with the **Silent Hill** series following the cancellation of **Silent Hills**, but that the company was set to sell the franchise on for a reported "billions" to Microsoft.

That "billions" line should have set off alarm bells, seeing as all of the **Silent Hill** games combined have never come close to making that sort of money.

Still, there were plenty of people who believed it, likely due to wishful thinking in the vain hope that we would get to see **Silent Hills** reborn and a continuation of the brilliant work shown off in the **P.T.** trailer.

As it stands, the rumour gained enough steam that Microsoft's Phil Spencer took to Twitter to debunk it. For their part, Konami are stating that they do intend to continue the franchise at a later date, though no solid plans have been announced.

STREET FIGHTER 5 Coming This Fiscal Year

Capcom has finally come out to confirm that **Street Fighter 5** is just around the corner... assuming it is a REALLY big corner we suppose.

The company has mentioned in their latest earnings report that they are expecting **Street Fighter 5** to be out at some point before the end of the fiscal year, which gives the company until the end of March to bring the latest instalment of the franchise to gamers.

There isn't really all that much to go on here, but the likelihood is that the company will be aiming for a Christmas release with enough leeway to go later if required.

Regardless, **Street Fighter** fans can start to get a little bit more excited now, as it's the first bit of concrete news about the game for quite a while.

Trent Reznor Acts as Consultant on ARKHAM KNIGHT Trailer

We expect that you have all seen the trailer for the upcoming **Arkham Knight** by now, right? You haven't? Get to it right now! It's ok, we'll wait...

Looks awesome, doesn't it? Especially the use of Nine Inch Nails' **The Wretched**. As you would expect, Trent Reznor will have had to have some role in the trailer, if only to OK the use of his band's song but, as it turns out, he had much more of a hand in the final product than you would think.

Reznor apparently acted as a consultant during the creation of the trailer and it was his input that led to Tim and Jeff Cronenweth lending a hand. Trent was thanked for his work on the official **Arkham Knight** Twitter feed and a legion of Batman fans just started salivating that much harder.

COMING SOON

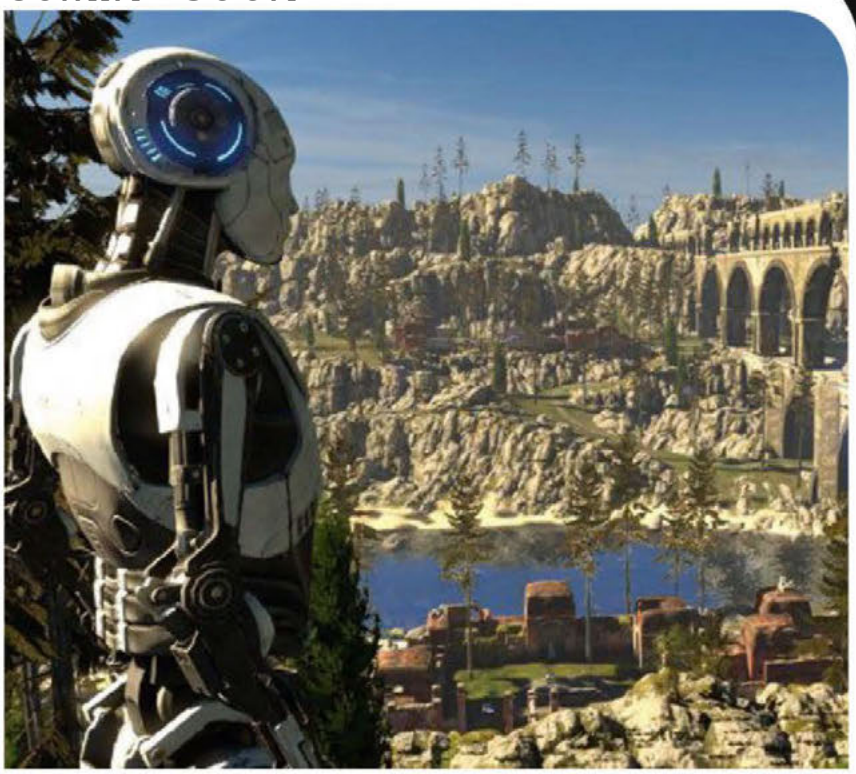
DRONE ZERO GRAVITY

PLATFORM: PC

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 11TH

There is likely not a single person reading this magazine who has never even so much as casually thought about what it would be like to head into space and experience zero gravity. The game places you in control of a drone tasked with protecting all human life and pits you against lasers and other energy weapons as you try to navigate various mazes and other obstacles. With a decent mix of puzzling and action, it should be well worth a try, especially considering that August is pretty light on releases all around.

COMING SOON



THE TALOS PRINCIPLE

PLATFORM: PS4

RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 25TH

The Talos Principle puts you in the shoes of a synthetic human who has awoken without any idea of where or who it is. A disembodied voice informs the player that they must collect sigils by exploring the various worlds in the game and then away you go. The game has already seen success on PCs and mobile devices, with its heady mix of first person play and some pretty mind-bending puzzles proving to be popular. It could make for a good choice if you want a little more thinking in your gaming.

Guillermo del Toro Talks SILENT HILLS

The cancellation of **Silent Hills** hit many gamers hard and there are already plenty of petitions going around to get development reinstated in some capacity.

Unfortunately, it doesn't look like any of that is going to get anywhere, but Guillermo del Toro has spoken about what he and Hideo Kojima had in mind for the game in a recent interview.

He commented: "*What we wanted to do with the game – and we were very much in agreement on this – was to take the technology and make it as cutting-edge as we could in creating terror in the house. The idea was very, very atmosphere-drenched. But what made **Silent Hill** so great was that you had the atmosphere but then you a pay-off with a very active, very intense series of moments. We wanted to do some stuff that I'm pretty sure – just in case it ever comes back, which honestly I would love for somebody to change their mind and we can do it – but in case it comes back, there was some stuff that was very new, and I wouldn't want to spoil it.*"

He also expressed his support for the petitions to get the title back on track and even said that he would sign one himself if it might help to get the powers that be at Konami onside.

It's looking unlikely that the conflict between Kojima and Konami is going to be resolved any time soon, but the game sounds like it would have been awesome. The fact that del Toro is still holding out hope that the property will be revived should be more than enough to tell anybody just how disappointing the cancellation of ***Silent Hills*** has been.

DR MARIO Comes to 3DS

Nintendo has announced that a new **Dr Mario** game is coming to the 3DS. Subtitled **Miracle Cure** the game will take the classic formula and mix it up a little bit by adding power-ups into the experience.

The game will only be released as a digital download and should be available by the time that you have this magazine in your hands, so get downloading if you were a fan of the original.

Bethesda Release DOOM 4 Teaser

E3 is getting closer. In fact, by the time you have this magazine in your hands it will have probably already happened. We already know that **Fallout 4** is coming, but there is another big hitter that has caught our eye in the run up to the event.

Bethesda has been working with Id Software on the follow up to **Doom 3**, which is now more than ten years old for those of you who are keeping count. That alone makes us feel old, seeing as we can still remember marvelling at the game's stunning graphics when it first came out.

Reminiscing aside, it has been far too long since the gaming world was graced with another instalment of **Doom**, so it is with great pleasure that we watched the teaser released by Bethesda earlier in the month.

It doesn't show a lot, but it's enough to get us very excited. The game is going to be released on the PC and all of the major current gen systems, minus the Wii U of course, and is being touted as a fast-paced first person shooter that harkens back to the glory days of the genre when players could hold as many weapons as they wanted and had to take on multiple enemies in panicked combat.

Perhaps more interesting is the revelation that reloading won't be required anymore which seems like something of an odd choice, and that both players and enemies will be able to perform instant-kill moves. That should certainly make things interesting, if a little bit different from traditional **Doom**.

Expect more news from E3.

COMING SOON

CROOKZ

PLATFORM: PC
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 25TH

How can you not love a game that has a trailer featuring Ron Jeremy? That was our first thought when we heard about Crookz, but the game itself actually sounds somewhat interesting as well. Crookz is a tactical heist game set in the 1970s, which means there is plenty of funk and disco to go along with your thievery. Smart planning is needed to overcome the levels and the game carries a bit of a Sims vibe in the graphical department. It's also clearly a little bit bonkers, which is never a bad thing.

COMING SOON

SENRAN KAGURA 2: DEEP CRIMSON

PLATFORM: 3DS
RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 12TH

We can't even fathom how this game has managed to get a release in Europe, as it is clearly the sort of title that is very much suited to Japanese sensibilities and not a whole lot else. SENRAN KAGURA 2 is a fighting game that has something of a... risqué element to it. The game is very keen on showcasing amply equipped and scantily clad women as they do battle against demons... or something. We don't really get it, but it's coming to the UK regardless. If you pre-order now you can even get the 'Happy Boobs' edition. So, yeah...

E3 to Open its Doors to the Public... a Little

Ever since the inception of E3, the event has always been something of an industry-only affair, with regular gamers relegated to the sidelines as they await news of the next big thing on the gaming horizon.

However, after demand from some of the event's exhibitors who have claimed that they want to get a little bit closer to consumers, the people behind E3 are apparently to make 4-5,000 tickets available to the public.

Hold your horses though, as these aren't tickets that you can just snap up for yourself. To get your hands on one, you will have to hope that an Electronic Software Association (ESA) exhibitor takes a shine to you, as it's the exhibitors who are going to be deciding who gets the passes.

The passes will be handed out to people the ESA have rather sickeningly dubbed 'prosumers,' which are apparently valued customers of the companies setting up stall at the event. Generally speaking, the bigger the company, the more passes they will be able to give out.

It will be interesting to see how all of this works, but it could end up being something of a watershed moment as members of the general public will finally be able to experience E3 for themselves.

THE LATEST GAMING RELEASES REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS

WITCHER 3: WILD HUNT

DEVELOPER: CD PROJEKT RED / PUBLISHER: BANDAI NAMCO / PLATFORM: PC, PLAYSTATION 4, XBOX ONE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Returning one last time, Witcher 3: Wild Hunt serves as the capstone to Geralt of Rivia's story. With the Northern Kingdoms embroiled in a bloody war following the death of so many of their kings, a spectral force has entered the fray: the dreaded Wild Hunt. As Geralt embarks upon a mission of personal importance, he soon finds that he is key to halting their onslaught.

Anyone who has played the previous Witcher titles can attest to the quality of CD Projekt RED's work, but Wild Hunt takes things to the next level. Not only is the environment vast, but this is one of the best open world titles to date, filled with far more encounters than you would ever find in Bethesda's Elder Scrolls series. Stroll off in one direction and you are bound to find over a dozen new locations, enemies and situations, not all of which you can initially confront. This means backtracking and re-visiting places is core to the game, often even those unmarked on the map.

The side-quests themselves prove to be thoroughly unpredictable and can affect the world in ways you'd not expect (rather than simply changing who lives in a certain town or a few lines of dialogue by an NPC) and can even lead to influencing the outcome of the main story in ways you would not expect. Simply tracking down a utensil can bring some very surprising twists and turns in an already very strong narrative.

The combat and environments themselves are spectacular, building upon past strengths and mitigating prior flaws. Casting magic mid battle and building a bestiary to combat bigger foes is core to the game, as is hunting. Tracking down a wounded monster and hunting hostile foes is a key element in the story, and helps add some real dimension to random encounters.

There are unfortunately two distinct failings which do hold this back from being totally perfect. The final act of the story unfortunately starts to get away from the writers in juggling so many elements. It's not hard to see where it unravels and it seems rushed in terms of resolving the main conflict, but thankfully just avoids pulling a Mass Effect 3. The other is how many quests, while well told, boil down to fetching items and in this respect the world's vast nature works against it.

Niggling issues aside, Witcher 3 still remains one of the strongest releases of this generation so far and an exemplary video game in every respect. This is a definite must buy for anyone looking for a fantastic RPG and a new watermark for world-building and storytelling in video games.

CALLUM SHEPHARD

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THE ADVENTURES OF PIP

DEVELOPER: TIC TOC GAMES / PUBLISHER: TIC TOC GAMES / PLATFORM: PC, MAC, WII U / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Adventures of Pip is a wonderfully adorable side-scrolling action-platformer that leaves little to be desired. You play as Pip, a singular pixel who's out to save the world and, of course, to save the kidnapped princess from the clutches of the Skeleton Queen. The princess has the power to control and create pixels, something which the Skeleton Queen wants for herself, and now the whole world's turned into a blocky nightmare for its many citizens. The story isn't anything to write home about, but the dialogue is witty and there are a few clever and funny moments that are memorable enough to make the plot a little more unique than other games of the genre.

Adventures of Pip doesn't just lump you with the same-old level designs and game mechanics that you might be used to; Pip is able to switch between his singular block form, a boy form, and eventually into a sword-wielding hero, giving you different skills and abilities to get yourself out of difficult situations. Switching between the human and pixel forms of Pip makes for unique gameplay, and requires a decent amount of thought and strategy if you're planning on reaching the next level.

This game isn't just fun to play because of the game mechanics or cutesy characters, it's also a visually enchanting game, with beautiful levels to traverse and lots to explore. For a game that prides itself on its use of pixels, Pip does an excellent job of inspiring the imagination through its colour, design and charming music.

One of the game's only downfalls is the currency system. You collect jewels found in chests strewn around each level, and while this is fun to begin with, it's soon obvious that you're going to need to do a whole lot of hunting to actually be able to afford anything. Merchants offer lots of items for sale, but at prices that aren't really realistic for the amount of jewels each level has to offer. You can spend your whole playthrough saving up for one item – only to find it doesn't even have that great an effect on the gameplay.

There's a lot to be said for Adventures of Pip, a game which celebrates the traditional pixel side-scroller whilst still bringing something new to the table. Although it follows the typical narrative of most side-scrolling pixelated games, Pip employs innovative gameplay methods and mechanics that really help to bring the world alive. From the female antagonist to the Bitstream, Adventures of Pip succeeds in subverting the traditional, creating a game that's not only fun to play, but also a joy to explore.

LARA BROWN

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AXIOM VERGE

DEVELOPER: TOM HAPP / PUBLISHER: THOMAS HAPP GAMES / PLATFORM: PC, PLAYSTATION 4, PLAYSTATION VITA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Between its charmingly blocky textures, vibrant environments and bleakly beautiful monstrosities as bosses, Tom Happ's Axiom Verge remains head and shoulders above the competition. While the sheer number of metroidvania side-scrollers being released these days is beyond number, even experienced veterans will find themselves challenged by some surprising breaks in genre conventions.

Fatally wounded in a lab accident, a scientist by the name of Trace awakens in an alien universe of cybernetic nightmares, with the player left to discover how he can return home. Along with skirting the edge of becoming a Silver Age superhero origin story, the plot here is perfect for these kinds of games. Easily skipped, those seeking puzzles and mechanics can move forwards unhindered by the story, while others are rewarded for seeking out answers with more details. Minimal as it might be, the sense of mystery and the quest to understand the unknown is more than enough to give a player real incentive to see just what lurks up ahead.

What quickly stands out is how the game avoids obvious solutions. Upon seeing a slightly higher ledge, players by this point have had it ingrained in their heads to expect a double jump or bomb-boost ability to show up. Axiom Verge instead opts to offer everything but the tried and true methods to traverse terrain, with grappling hooks, drones and more bizarre power-ups arising in their place. Equally, the weapons prove to be astoundingly diverse with some delightfully destructive options from very early on, notably a cluster-explosive weapon and an arc lightning gun. These are designed to be rapidly switched between, and the Playstation 4's controllers – using the left stick as a select menu – prove to be especially well suited to this style of play.

However, while the weapons variety and methods of travel prove to be relentlessly fun, the combat itself is sadly lacking. Due to the limited pathfinding capabilities of the AI and with so many spread-shot weapons, many players will often find themselves just tricking enemies into getting caught on edges of the terrain rather than outright fighting them. What's more, the sheer number of dead ends all throughout the game proves to be relentlessly infuriating. Backtracking is core to this genre to be sure, yet at the same time you can easily be stuck for hours when the number of these areas doubles about halfway through the campaign.

Despite a few aggravating shortcomings, Axiom Verge proves itself to be among the far better metroidvania creations. The creativity and obvious love from its developer shines through despite a few flaws, meaning it doesn't quite live up to the hype.

CALLUM SHEPHARD

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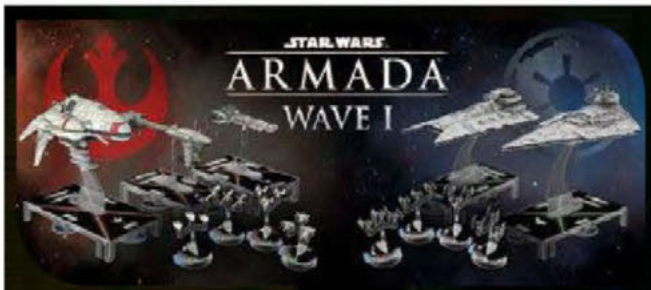

STAR WARS ARMADA (WAVE ONE)

DESIGNER: JAMES KNIFFEN, CHRISTIAN T. PETERSEN / PUBLISHER: FANTASY FLIGHT GAMES / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

For any tabletop game to survive, it needs to be well supported. Though the starter set for Star Wars: Armada provided plenty of fun and nostalgia (as well as enough ships to re-enact key scenes from the movie), it did present the Imperial Forces as an implacable foe with unbeatable ships; Rebel players learned to rely on speed and cunning in order to win and though this is part of the game design, more than a few fans noted that what was really required was some big guns.

The first wave of add-on models fixes this by introducing the Assault Frigate Expansion. If you've played various Star Wars video games, you'll recognise this as the big frog-like space ship with countless guns and bombs. The model itself is rather lovely; the organic bulbous shape provides a stark contrast to the wedge-shaped Star Destroyers. Gameplay-wise, it's a titan of a ship. Easily able to go toe-to-toe with a Victory class ship, the Assault Frigate can take a licking and keep on killing. Players can customise it with extra weapons cards and unique traits, and you'll need to do that; put this on your board and it'll draw all the turbolaser fire. You'll also need a screen of fighters; luckily wave one has launched a pack full of the things.

The Rebel Fighter Squadron pack gives you A, B, X and Y-wings. The starter set also features X-wings and they're nifty little things that take the hits for your capital ships and do some damage. The A-wings do the same job, but are faster. They're great for occupying TIE Fighters while you line up a killer shot. The B and Y-wings are best used as bombers. The Y's have enough power to keep your squadrons alive long enough to drop some bombs on the bad guys before getting blasted away by some TIEs.

Of course, Wave One features an Imperial Fighter Squadron as well. We get all sorts of TIEs here: Interceptors, Bombers, Advanced, and of course, Fighters. The Interceptors are lethal against enemy squadrons, expect them to rip through X-wings whilst getting destroyed by withering turbo-laser fire from the capital ships. The Advanced makes a good support squadron for anything on the board, and the Bombers are nice, though not as nice as the Rebel equivalent (the Y-wings). Your TIE fighters will still die in droves no matter what you try; that's what they're for.

It wouldn't be a Star Wars Armada release without a pretty-looking Imperial ship, and we get that with the Gladiator-class Star Destroyer. Despite looking like a wedge with its nose cut off, it's still a nicely put together capital ship. It's also bristling with firepower. It's a thug of a starship, meant to hang round the back and smack the enemy ships around at range. It's fast enough to react to changes on the board as well; the rules allow it some flexibility, though mostly you'll be ordering TIE's to protect its flanks and blasting the heck out of the lighter Rebel ships every chance you get.

Wave One is a promising release; the much-needed firepower for the Rebels hasn't taken anything away from their light and flexible advantage, whereas the Imperial range continues to play to their thuggish strengths. So far, so good; we'll be interested to see how this range develops.

ED FORTUNE

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WOLFENSTEIN: THE OLD BLOOD

DEVELOPER: MACHINEGAMES / PUBLISHER: BETHESDA SOFTWORKS / PLATFORM: PC, PLAYSTATION 4, XBOX ONE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

When it comes to villains, few can top the Nazis. Yet for all the fun Medal of Honor offers in taking them down, you then have the likes of Wolfenstein bringing things to the next level with its Tarantino-esque bombastic narrative, and then adding a level of occult and mad science Hellboy would be proud of. The Old Blood continues this trend, serving as a standalone expansion to The New Order and fleshing out B.J. Blazkowicz's final missions in the Second World War.

Mechanically, The Old Blood is extremely similar to its predecessor. Dual wielding and overcharging health systems both make a welcome return, along with a large number of foes from the armoured minigun wielding cyborgs to radio equipped officers. The same assets are present for most of the basic weapons, and the main changes this time revolve around the setting, characters and a few methods to move around the environment.

Sticking primarily to a Nazi occupied castle and town (nostalgia galore!) the environment and aesthetic is distinctly different, gravitating closer to the environment of the older games. This allows it to retain an identity of its own to a degree, and the writing has a distinctly different tone. This is most obvious with the brilliant soundtrack adding a great deal of atmosphere to a short game, and certain social norms which are a hallmark of the 1940s.

Unfortunately, however, while this is strong, there are two aspects which truly hold back the game from true greatness. The first is the unfortunate effect of its era. While certainly unique by comparison, lacking the vast and varied environments of The New Order means that it is notably small scale. This is only made far worse given the game's linearity, and how it lacks some of the fun insanity of the prior title, such as metal-cutting guns and laser weapons. If anything, it seems far more toned down by comparison. In addition to this, many new elements seem lacking. The aforementioned travelling system allowing Blazkowicz to scale walls is limited to only a few points and offers little beyond glorified ladder climbing. Until the second half of the game, much of the overt insanity fans might hope for is absent entirely, and even then far too much of it is taking place off-screen.

The Old Blood is sadly no Far Cry 3: Blood Dragon. While it has its charms and does offer a few ideas its predecessor lacked, you'd be forgiven for feeling this one was a step down. It's an entertaining shooter to be sure and good to see Machinegames experimenting with this setting, but just temper your expectations before getting this one.

CALLUM SHEPHARD

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RETRO BYTES

A LOOK BACK AT THE WORLD OF RETRO GAMING BY CHRIS JACKSON

LIGHT BYTES...

Otherwise known as 'another one of those where we throw a bunch of completely unrelated titles at you one after the other because they're all really good, but they don't really warrant more than a few paragraphs'. **Get on with it!**

Skeleton Krew (Mega Drive, 1995)

Koming to us from 1995, when apparently it was still really really kool to spell things inkorrektly, a 2.5D (sort of half top-down, in other words) futuristik mutant-murdering space adventure of gigantik proportions! To kut a long story short (I'll stop with the "k" thing now), you play as one of three biomechanical skeleton warriors, and your mission is to find and kill an evil mutant space fiend (known as a kadaver, no less) for reasons that don't really become clear. It seems to be something to do with a kryogenics plant (their spelling of it, not mine) and a superdestructive megaweapon, but it doesn't really matter.

The first thing you'll need to do is choose which badass robot skeleton you want to be. Each one has identical weapons and a silly name (Spine, Rib or Joint), but they vary slightly in terms of speed, agility, and durability. Joint is by far the best, just because he can take much more damage than the other two. I mean, it's totally up to you, but go for Joint. Honestly...

When you've chosen Joint as your character, you'll be dropped off in the first of six levels with a whole horde of horrors ahead of you. There's not much to the gameplay apart from running around and shooting things, but it's so much fun that the lack of variety doesn't really matter. Auto-fire is enabled from the start, so you can pretty much just hold the fire button and blow everything up as you make your way through the levels, but there's also a handy "swivel" feature where pressing certain buttons makes the top half of your body rotate a full 360 degrees left or right. Unfortunately, it's a bit tricky to get the hang of, but it's the thought that counts, right? As an added bonus, if you're quite childish, you can get a few laughs by rotating yourself 180 degrees so your body faces completely the opposite direction to your legs.

On the down side, the six levels are all fairly short (that bit about "galactic proportions" at the beginning was just put in to make you keep reading), and some power-ups and extra weapons would have been appreciated. But throw in some of the nicest graphics on the Mega Drive, a handful of well-designed boss fights, some beautifully subtle sci-fi background music, a wide array of baddies, and even a light puzzle element towards the end (in the 'where the hell am I supposed to go now?' sense), overall it's a really enjoyable way to spend half an hour or so.

Undead Line (Mega Drive, 1991)

Side-scrolling shoot 'em ups were all over the place during the '90s, and there weren't many ways to separate one from another. You're in a spaceship, you avoid bullets, shoot stuff, and don't get blown up. *Undead Line* does things slightly differently, setting you down with two feet firmly on the ground as you dodge and launch projectiles around six vertically-scrolling levels.

There's some sort of story involving ancient magical powers, but as with many games from this era it really isn't important. All we're interested in is how much stuff

we get to smash up, right? The answer in this case is 'loads and loads and loads'. Through caves, a cemetery, forests, ruins and other suitably Gothic locations, countless monsters crawl and fly and stumble towards you with alarming pace, and there's no going back once you've started a level – the screen keeps scrolling up and up and up at a fairly frantic pace, leading to moments of panic, desperation, and disappointment (and, on the odd occasion when things go your way, pure joy). Wooden chests contain weapons and power-ups, and these can be cycled through by shooting them before collection, so you've always got a chance of picking up whatever you need.

And you really will need to be picking some of those items up, because *Undead Line* is hellishly difficult. Three hits and you're dead, lose three lives and it's game over. There's no period of invincibility after taking a hit, so you need to keep a constant lookout for any stray projectiles heading your way. You do have a shield, but it's of little assistance considering you can be attacked from all sides and the shield only defends against a direct frontal onslaught. On top of that, there are no checkpoints in the levels, so if you get right to the end and die it's either back to the beginning or controller out of the window time...

If you're in the mood for an atmospheric and challenging shooter, this is one of the best we've come across in a long time. Originally only available in Japan, your good friend The Internet should be able to point you towards a handy English translation. Don't send us the bill when you've put your foot through the TV though, will you?

UNDEAD LINE

Super R-Type (1991)

Playing *Undead Line* reminded me of another favourite shooter, one that a lot of people have heard of, but surprisingly it seems like not many folk have actually played it. Yes, it's just another one of seven million horizontally-scrolling space-based shoot 'em ups, but this one's just so pleasing that even gamers who aren't necessarily fans of the genre should be able to wring a fair amount of enjoyment out of it.

Basically a 16-bit port of the arcade version of *R-Type 2* with a few extra levels added in for good measure, *Super R-Type* sends you through space doing the standard robot-shooting nonsense that you'd expect. Huge bosses will get in your way, there'll be some tight twists and turns to navigate, and one hit and you're dead. Oh yes, it's one of those horrible rotters. Some awesome power-ups are on your side though, with weapons changing frequently throughout each level and a special detachable cannon that you can fire across the screen to be used almost like an independent extension of your own ship until whatever point you decide to reattach it. Stunning graphics and catchy music add a lot to the experience, earning our vote as one of the best shoot 'em ups ever made.

SUPER R-TYPE

The Rocky Horror Show (1986)

Finishing off with a massively silly one that's been on the list for a long time, but there hasn't really been anywhere suitable to stick it in. It's *The Rocky Horror Show* on the ZX Spectrum! And I'll tell you what, for such a basic game (and basic system, really) there's an awful lot going on here. After reaching the pleasurable end of the Spectrum's customary eight-hour loading screens, you're greeted by a nice title screen featuring four little green men dancing around to a lovely bleepy chorus of *The Time Warp*. If you enjoy it, you even get the option to repeat the intro before starting the game! Assuming you don't get stuck in a *Time Warp* loop, choose to play as Brad or Janet and get on with rescuing whichever one of those you didn't want to control!

Your task will be to explore Frank-N-Furter's mansion to collect broken pieces of the De-Medusa machine, and put them back together to release your beau from its mysterious time-freezing powers. Various characters from the film patrol the levels, and will have a few things to say if they manage to catch (i.e. bump into) you. Or in Meatloaf's case, he'll just sing at you. But that's fine, Meatloaf's alright, isn't he? *Hot Patootie* and all that.

Brad and Janet don't seem to be capable of multi-tasking, so each piece of the De-Medusa machine has to be dropped off before another can be collected, which does make things unnecessarily complicated at times. Wandering around the different rooms in the mansion is quite fun though, as you're never sure what might be waiting on the next screen. A super-secret science lab? A nicely laid dinner table? Or how about a migraine-inducing room full of flashing mushrooms and syringes? Oh yeah, and don't let Frank steal your clothes, otherwise you'll have to comically sidestep around the place covering your important parts with your hands until you find where he's put them!

It's such a simple game, but completely round the bend at the same time. Just you wait until we dig out the CD-ROM version, there's some real insanity in store there!

ROLL FOR DAMAGE

ED FORTUNE GUIDES YOU THROUGH THE REALM OF TABLETOP GAMING

Board game fans will recognise the name Bruno Cathala; he's the gent who designed *Shadows over Camelot*, the Arthurian conspiracy game which I've raved about in the past. He also came up with *Cyclades,* the game of bothering Greek Gods, which I also quite liked and *Mr Jack,* the charming game of murder which takes the classic board game *Cluedo* and gives it a good stabbing. His most recent games include *Abyss* (which we'll delve deeply into some other time) and the most excellent and extremely pretty *Five Tribes,* which has been played so much at the Secret STARBURST Thunderdome that we've actually broken the (rather robust) box.

Put simply, *Five Tribes* is Mancala for maniacs. The game is played on a tiled square board, and each tile has a special property. Scattered onto the tiles are different coloured 'meeples' (small man shaped counters). You select a tile on the board and collect all of the meeples standing on it. You then place one meeple on an adjacent tile and continue until you run out of little wooden men. The last one you place then triggers an effect, depending on the colour of meeple it is. These tend to be things like summoning Djinns, killing off other meeples or scoring points. Once a tile has been emptied, you place a camel on it, to mark it as yours. This also scores you points. There are also goods to collect, which if collected properly, can win you the game. In essence, *Five Tribes* is lots of little games, all going off at once.

One of Cathala's trademark tricks is to build player versus player interaction into the game itself. Typically, this is one stand out mechanic (such as The Traitor in *Shadows over Camelot*), but in *Five Tribes,* every single layer of game play has a knock-on effect, meaning that the players are constantly communicating with each other. Because each coloured piece changes the game in a different way, it's hard to predict what other players will do. The pieces are constantly being moved, so you're watching what other players are doing constantly. The tension builds and you find yourself trying to work out how your competitors think. To make things even more engaging, turn order is worked out by auction; however, you auction off victory points. By gambling your potential to win in order to increase your chances, the tension racks up.

The game plays very quickly (about an hour); you are essentially removing pieces from the board as you go. One of the nice things about *Five Tribes* is that it's always changing; this means that card counters and people who prefer to win using formula and maths will have a devil of a time working out the optimal strategy. It's a game of reading the board and your opponents, then shrugging and trying what seems like a good idea at the time.

It's not perfect; if you have a player who tends to dither and ponder, then you may need to give them a kick when playing this one; analysis paralysis is a hazard of this game because it looks like there is a pattern to the madness (there isn't). The length of game play and complexity makes it an ideal 'mid-session' game, something to play before you dive into something lengthy and meaty. This has placed it on constant rotation in more than a few games clubs.

The pieces are also very pretty, even for a Days of Wonder game. It has lots of brightly painted wooden components and the Djinn cards are especially nice.

It's also well packed, which is handy as you'll be taking it out of the box a lot.

Another very pretty game that's quick to play and is also getting a lot of use is Space Cowboy's *Black Fleet*. As you may be able to guess from the name, it's a game of pirate ships. The board is a weird abstract version of the Caribbean, designed with cramped and narrow passageways to make it rather tricky to navigate your brightly-coloured plastic ships without slamming into one another, which is rather the point. It's also a very nice looking board, with bright colours and a big design aesthetic. It also comes with really nice metal coins that go *clink*. They aren't really needed, but they are nice.

The aim of the game is to move your big fat merchant ship from port to port, shifting cargo as you do. You also have a pirate ship, and its job is to mug other merchant ships for treasure, and then go away and bury that gold on an island. Movement is done by drawing cards, and each card also lets you move a navy galleon. Galleons can be moved by any player with the right card and can sink pirate ships. This game of gentle shoving and desperate blowing would work very well just like that, but it enjoys two extra mechanics.

Firstly it has Fortune cards, which is something I tend to favour in games anyway. (I also tend to favour the bold, but that's another story.) These are random chance cards that can turn out to be real game changers. They improve movement or move pieces round, etc. They're written in such a way that you really feel like they're elements in a story, which improves the immersive feel of the game. The other set of cards are upgrades; you need to unlock all your upgrades to win the game, especially as one of the upgrades is your 'happy ending'. Upgrades tend to provide clever little stunts that you can pull during game play. I especially enjoy giving the merchant ships some guns to defend themselves; it tends to shock pirates.

Whereas *Five Tribes* is a detailed, maths-driven game that uses complexity to befuddle the players to make them forget about the numbers and have fun, *Black Fleet* is pretty simple. There aren't much in the way of complex mechanics and rules. Every effort has been made to make the basic rules easy to remember, from the layout of the board to the design of the various pieces. Both achieve the same end however; they're fun and rapid to play beer and snacks style games that can form an essential part of your evening's gaming. *Five Tribes* is very much a board game geeks' game; it is family friendly, but younger players may find themselves freezing when they make the mistake of trying to keep track of all the game's moving parts. *Black Fleet* lacks this glorious chaos, but replaces this deficiency with storytelling; it's absurdly easy to find yourself doing a really bad Captain Jack Sparrow impersonation.

In other gaming-related news, I hear that *Magic: The Gathering*'s launch of its latest set, *Modern Masters*, went rather well. Long-term readers will be pleased to know that I still have an addiction to *Magic*, so it was nice to learn that over the course of a weekend an estimated 5,000 fans played in Grand Prix Chiba, Japan; another 5,000 in Grand Prix Utrecht, Netherlands; and an estimated 11,000 played in Grand Prix Las Vegas. There were also four weddings and 3,800 player tournaments. I will resist the urge to deliver a blow-by-blow account on the games themselves.

Finally, if watching *Mad Max: Fury Road* in the cinema has made you nostalgic for board games such as *Car Wars*, *Thunder Road* or even *Dark Future*, then you may be pleased to learn that 20mm scale automotive carnage game *The Devil's Run: Route 666* utterly trounced its Kickstarter goal and looks like it's good to go. Filled with spiky cars and gyrocopters, it's the most promising looking of all the similarly-themed games that leapt onto Kickstarter as soon as the new Max movie came out. I'll see if I can get my greasy hands on it in future; if I'm honest, I'm still holding out for the relaunch of Steve Jackson Games' *Car Wars*, though at this point, I'd settle for *Dark Future* or Gorkamorka. That said, Games Workshop do seem to be producing games again; *Assassinorum: Execution Force* came out recently, which looks lovely, and I may get round to discussing it in a future column, but for now we've run out of room, so It will have to wait.

PHOTO: CRAIG GIBSON

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WATTO'S EMPORIUM

STUFF WE LIKED FROM AROUND THE WEB THIS MONTH WITH JACK BOTTOMLEY

STREETS AHEAD OF THE COMPETITION

When talking about shirts, there are thousands upon thousands of great contenders but just when you think you can't be surprised, numskull comes along with a great big KO. Their new range of **Street Fighter** shirts are enough to have fans of the iconic video game phenomenon jumping for joy. In the range is a selection of Ken, Ryu and Blanka shirts decorated with each brawler's country flag. The designs are superb and the gear could only look harder if Chuck Norris was wearing it. Photo opportunity alert!

What's that you say? You want to go cooler (see we can use hip terminology too)? Well, join the club, literally, with our personal favourites in these badass shirts that are inspired by playing cards. You have a choice of two in the Ken of Clubs and the Ryu of Hearts, both featuring the fighter placed over the playing card and wrapped in their nation's flag (Ken - USA, Ryu - Japan, duh). Talk about tough decisions (you see what we did there? Tough. As in tough fighters? Moving on...).

OFFICIAL STREET FIGHTER KEN OF CLUBS/RYU OF HEARTS T-SHIRTS - £22 EACH

OFFICIAL STREET FIGHTER KEN OF USA T-SHIRT - £22

OFFICIAL STREET FIGHTER RYU OF JAPAN T-SHIRT - £22

OFFICIAL STREET FIGHTER BLANKA OF BRAZIL T-SHIRT - £22

ALL AVAILABLE FROM NUMSKULL.CO.UK

KI KI KI MA MA MA...

The sad passing of Mrs Voorhees herself Betsy Palmer is a sad loss to horror cinema, so celebrate her and her beloved (and slightly unstable, not to mention un-killable) onscreen son Jason with this absolutely brilliant **Friday the 13th** Goblet available from Excalibur Direct Express Toys.

As we recently reported here on the movie grapevine... or in this case lake-vine, Jason Voorhees is heading back to the big screen (for an appropriate 13th time) and it won't be in a sequel capacity to Platinum Dunes' 2009 remake (insert opinion on that here). So while you await another slice n' dice venture into the dreaded holiday camp (seriously, why don't those sex-starved campers just take the bloody hint?!), pour yourself a drink and toast the franchise's mighty hockey mask-clad madman with this bizarre and yet very well crafted item. Of course we should warn you drinking from this cup may well turn you into an invincible, murderous, (hockey-playing?) psychopath - so be sure to drink in moderation.

FRIDAY THE 13TH GOBLET - £9.93
AVAILABLE FROM EXCALIBURDIRECTEXPRESSTOYS.CO.UK

WEAR DEVIL

Well, now that we have all calmed down from how well the Netflix exclusive series Daredevil handled Marvel's blind lawyer by day/red-costumed hard arse by night, why not remind yourself of the character's equally exciting comic book roots? How you ask, well once again the masters of comic based clobber over at All the Heroes have the answer, in this absolutely brilliant Daredevil Neon Comic Cover T-Shirt. Not hot enough featuring the red rascal alone, the shirt also features him in a fight with a certain Captain that you may have heard of before. Trading punches with Captain America, wow, he really is "the man without fear", unless he has a go with Hulk too, then he's the man without brains!

DAREDEVIL (NEON COVER) T-SHIRT - £12.99
AVAILABLE FROM ALLTHEHEROES.CO.UK

ANT AND DEC-IMATE

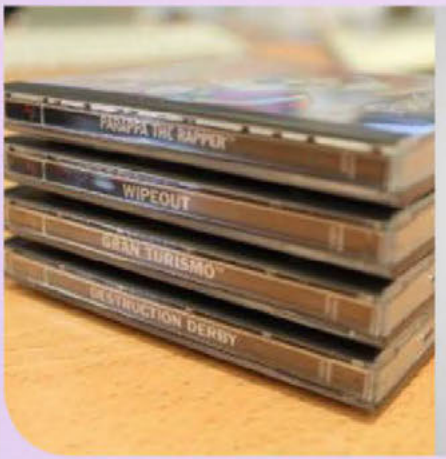
For all you movie lovers looking ahead, however, the folks at Forbidden Planet have you covered, and if you like your merch with lashings of dystopia, then this new Terminator Genisys (which by now you should be well read-up on this issue) Guardian T-800 Action Figure should do the trick. While we are somewhat worried by the spoileriffic trailers and risky directions this new film looks to be taking, seeing Arnie live up to his immortal words and come back to the franchise is most welcome. As is this neatly designed figure with a lot of articulation and accessories. Pre-Order now to avoid persecution by Skynet when the inevitable takeover occurs.

Punters can also get ahead with this face-to-face Ant-Man T-shirt. Marvel Studios' upcoming film, starring Paul Rudd as the pint-sized protagonist, is certainly among the studio's most interesting projects in some time and we can't wait to find out the results on the July 17th. Until then, fans can pre-order this flashy shirt that features Ant-Man facing off (if you will) with his foe Yellowjacket (who will be portrayed by Corey Stoll in the film).

STAYSTATION

Back to the video gaming theme now over at Yellow Bulldog, with these items of nostalgic niftiness! Hang on a sec, nostalgic, since when did the PlayStation One become such an item of nostalgia?! Ay Caramba, we feel old! Oh well, the warm feeling we get from these stonkingly brilliant drinks coasters will undoubtedly help. Essentially, these coasters are replica versions of PlayStation classics: PaRappa the Rapper, Gran Turismo, Destruction Derby and Wipeout. These babies have to be the classiest drinks coasters we have ever seen! If this is what volume 1 consists of, we cannot wait to see Vol. 2 (Fingers crossed for Crash Bandicoot)!

PLAYSTATION VOL.1 - £14.99 AVAILABLE FROM YELLOWBULLDOG.CO.UK



TERMINATOR GENISYS ACTION FIGURE
GUARDIAN T-800 - £19.99 (PRE-ORDER)
RELEASED JULY 30TH

ANT-MAN FACE-TO-FACE T-SHIRT
£12.99 (PRE-ORDER)
RELEASED JULY 31ST

BOTH AVAILABLE FROM
FORBIDDENPLANET.CO.UK

PAUL MOUNT'S TV ZONE

STANDBY FOR ACTION! THIS MONTH THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO!, WE SAY TA-TA TO TATAU AND GO BATTY FOR BATES MOTEL...

Thunderbirds! Thunderbirds Are Go!! Just the words are enough to send a little shiver up and down the spines of a generation of crinklies whose 1960s childhood was defined by the genius of Gerry Anderson's **Fireball XL5**, **Stingray**, **Captain Scarlet and the Mysterons** and his marionette masterpiece **Thunderbirds**. (Some - naming no names, ahem - will champion late 1960s live-action series **UFO** as Mr A's finest hour - or twenty-six hours - but that's for another time and place...) In many ways, **Thunderbirds** as a series has a bit of the time machine about it and certainly this TV Zoner can't help but be transported back to simpler, happier times at the very mention of the show's name or at the sound of the first bar of Barry Gray's legendary strident signature tune. **Thunderbirds** evokes memories of so many things; watching each new episode in flickering black-and-white, proudly wearing my International Rescue costume complete with its shiny plastic cap, Dinky (or was it Corgi?) toy Thunderbird craft, new comic strip adventures in the extravagantly-printed *TV 21 Comic* - a young imagination set ablaze by the fruits of Gerry Anderson's formidable creativity. Memories, too, of a best friend no longer with us; he was always Scott Tracy racing along in TB1, I plodded along in his wake as Virgil in the more lumbering TB2... art imitating life.

Despite its many revivals over the decades - what a joy to see the show exploding anew when it was dusted down and screened for the first time in decades on BBC Two in the early 1990s, International Rescue mania born again for the children (or grandchildren?) of those who were there the first time around - **Thunderbirds** has remained very firmly frozen in time; a period piece exhumed occasionally but enjoyed and appreciated in very different ways in the cold light of boring adulthood. We'll speak not of the 2004 feature film directed by that bloke off **Star Trek** in case there are children reading (oh to hell with it - it was fucking *appalling*); to all intents and purposes, **Thunderbirds** as a new film or TV franchise looked about as likely as a second series of **Space Precinct** - and certainly Gerry's own long-cherished dream of winning back the rights to his first true masterpiece and bringing it back to TV screens where it belonged went sadly unrealised.

And yet you can't keep a good TV show down and the Tracy Brothers and their fleet of futuristic rescue vehicles have been born again in a brash, manic new incarnation created by and for Children's ITV in association with New Zealand's Pukeko Pictures, the animation studio founded by Richard Taylor and Tania Rodgers, the creative powerhouses behind the Weta Workshops - whose practical effects, alongside those of sister company Weta Digital, helped bring to life Peter Jackson's apparently never-ending dalliances with Middle-earth. The new series, **Thunderbirds Are Go!,** wisely avoids all the stupid pitfalls which the-2004-film-which-dares-not-speak-its-name happily blundered into time and again. This is clearly the work of people who know, love and - most importantly - *understand* what made the 1960s series tick. **Thunderbirds** wasn't broken so there was no need to fix it; but, like many a reboot/remake/reinvention, some slight retooling was required to bring the show in line with modern sensibilities and expectations. The iconic designs of the Thunderbird vehicles have, by and large, remained unchanged save a few minor modifications (and a totally redesigned Thunderbird 5 space station), the Tracy Brothers are all present and correct (although dad Jeff is absent, missing in action following a plane crash), the evil Hood is still plaguing International Rescue's activities and we've still got London agent Lady Penelope (voiced by *Gone Girl* Rosamund Pike) and her oikish chauffeur Parker (now re-envisaged as a "grey ninja" action hero and yet, thrillingly, still voiced by the legendary David Graham).

Production techniques have obviously changed too. Stiff, inflexible puppets and visible strings are out; the characters in **Thunderbirds Are Go!** are all realised in vivid CGI, which means they can walk (at last!), run, jump and generally move in ways the dear old Supermarionation figures couldn't, despite the best efforts of Gerry and his talented team. There's even a welcome return for good old-fashioned model work courtesy of an intricately-detailed realisation of Tracy Island and every episode features some model landscape, building or edifice which is generally flawlessly integrated into the CGI world of the characters and the Thunderbird vehicles themselves. Even Barry Gray's memorable theme tune is back, albeit rearranged and modified by **Doctor Who**'s go-to conductor/arranger Ben Foster

THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO!

THUNDERBIRDS ARE GO!

before morphing into a rather more generic piece of action TV soundtrack.

So everything appears to be present and correct and all's right with the world of International Rescue. But is **Thunderbirds Are Go!** any good? Well, just this once - it's not for me to say. It really isn't. Nor is it really the place of angry ageing Anderson fans who are complaining that this is "a travesty of the original" and that the legacy of the classic series has been somehow sullied and besmirched by this loud, breathless new imposter. Because the point is that **Thunderbirds Are Go!** *is* respecting the 1960s series, but isn't being a slave to it because that's not why it's here. It's not aimed at *me*; it's not aimed at over-earnest forty and fifty-somethings who still have their Dinky or Corgi **Thunderbird** toys in their original blister packaging. Unlike **Doctor Who**, which was resurrected in the hope of finding the same broad all-generations family audience which had watched it in its heyday, **Thunderbirds Are Go!** is aimed fairly and squarely at today's eight-year-olds, an audience underserved and undervalued in today's sometimes bewildering multi-channel environment. The makers of **Thunderbirds Are Go!** have taken the core enduring elements of the original, the ones that worked so well the first time around, and married them to production techniques and storytelling values appropriate for a kid's show made in 2015, paying due reverence to the original in the hope that purists will approve, but making a show determinedly aimed at today's bright, imaginative kids.

So it'd be at best petty and at worst mean-minded of me to make a Big Thing out of the fact that **Thunderbirds Are Go!** isn't quite the **Thunderbirds** of my short-trouser days. Yes, the twenty-three minute episode format doesn't leave much room for complex storylines (remember the original show was padded out to fifty minutes only at the behest of Lew Grade who liked what he saw of the original thirty-minute shows Gerry Anderson had been making and asked for longer episodes), yes the show misses Jeff Tracy, yes it could do with a few of those big set-piece explosions, yes the model work is often very obvious table-top stuff lacking the detail and definition of the work of the great Derek Meddings; *Yes, yes, yes*...

But so what? I'm delighted that **Thunderbirds** is back and, by and large, made with loving care and attention by people who give a damn. And I'm glad it's being aimed directly at a young audience often overlooked these days because it's assumed that kids just don't want to watch TV any more. **Thunderbirds Are Go!** can't hope to have the same massive cultural impact as the original did back in the days when there were only two TV channels in Britain, but if just a handful of the kids watching the series today are as thrilled, charmed and captivated by **Thunderbirds Are Go!** as we were by **Thunderbirds**, then that's all FAB by me.

This isn't my **Thunderbirds** and nor was it supposed to be. I've got my **Thunderbirds**; it sits in a nice warm corner of my memory (and in a box on my DVD shelf, but that's by the by) and just knowing that today's kids have got a **Thunderbirds** of their very own seems to make the world a slightly less desperate place.

TATAU

I suspect I might well have been 'last man standing' by the time BBC Three hurried through the last few episodes of its latest 'supernatural drama' **Tatau**. Ratings for the eight-episode show plunged off a cliff so quickly the BBC bundled the last four together in double bills in a damage limitation move so it could (probably) be replaced be more repeats of the stubbornly-popular **Family Guy**. **Tatau** might well be BBC Three's last original drama (the channel's future remains up in the air) and it's an ignominious end to a solid run of cult dramas which include the hugely popular **Being Human** and the less popular (but BAFTA-winning... go figure) **The Fades** and **In the Flesh**. **Tatau** was never in their league, but it deserved better than being swept off the screen in such a perfunctory manner.

As any of the three or four people who stuck with the show will tell you, **Tatau** told of the exploits of a couple of likely London lads who decide to up sticks and travel around the world. Kyle (Joe Layton) and Budgie (Theo Barklem-Biggs) pitch up in the (fictional) island of Manu Taki in the Cook Islands where, after a night on a local hallucinogenic grog, Kyle starts receiving odd, disquieting visions of the death of local girl Aumea (Shushila Takao). Kyle becomes obsessed with interpreting his visions, working out their connection with the self-designed tattoo etched onto his arm before he left London, and preventing the girl's death; but his single-minded determination brings him into conflict with the girl's family, local pearl smugglers, and mysterious visitations from a long-dead Maori warrior who becomes his guide through the murky and mysterious netherworld of Maori myth and legend.

Created by Richard Zajdlic, *Tatau* was a handsome and exotic series (and in its own way a refreshing change from the sometimes drab and dour settings of BBC Three's previous genre efforts) but it ended up being a slightly schizophrenic viewing experience. It soon became obvious not only that **Tatau** wasn't entirely sure what it wanted to be, but also that there just wasn't enough material in the story to justify eight forty-minute instalments. Whole episodes seemed to roll by with nothing happening except Kyle agonising over his visions and strengthening his determination to prevent them coming true and one episode veered into a bizarre homage to **Randall and Hopkirk** when Budgie appears to Kyle as an out-of-body presence while his mortal form is comatose in hospital after being hit by a car. But too much time was spent on Kyle brooding and simmering, arguing the same plot-points over and over again, and Budgie trying to lighten the mood with slightly tiresome laddish humour. The last episode justified the effort made sticking by the series, though, in a final atmospheric race-against-time to prevent eerie aquatic demon creatures swarming out of a magic pool. Or something. I think I might have been high on Assam tea by the time the finale rolled around...

Maybe **Tatau** was a bit too esoteric

TATAU

ALSO SCREENING

AGENT CARTER

At last, a UK broadcaster for the slick, classy eight-episode mini-series starring Hayley Atwell as Captain America's 1940's squeeze working as a secret agent. A ten-episode second series is on its way; hopefully Brit fans won't have to wait quite as long to see it...

FOX UK, from July.

BETWEEN

Six-episode Canadian series in which a mysterious disease kills everybody over the age of 22 in the picturesque town of Pretty Lake. Teen crises ensue as the town is quarantined. **Under the Dome** for young adults.

NETFLIX, available now.

HUMANS

Eight-episode British series based on Swedish series **Real Humans** set in a future where 'synths' - lifelike robot servants - are the latest must-have domestic accessory. More on **Humans** in a future TV Zone.

Channel 4 from June 14th.

MR. ROBOT

Ahead of its official broadcast on the USA Network in the States later in the month, the pilot of this gripping, atmospheric thriller about a young computer hacker enlisted by a mysterious cabal to help bring down multinational CEOs has been debuted online on YouTube. Stars Rami Malek and Christian Slater.

YouTube, available now.

EXTANT

Thirteen-episode second season of the Halle Berry-starring series picks up from the end of the first with astronaut Molly Woods searching for her alien son whose very existence threatens the future of Mankind. Oo-er...

Amazon Prime, weekly from July 2nd.

for BBC Three tastes, or maybe - and more likely - as a drama it was just too unfocused, poorly paced and too far from its audience's reality to make a proper connection. But if history does record **Tatau** as BBC Three's drama swansong, at least they went out attempting to do something a little bit different, even if its failure - and the subsequent failure of the much higher-profile *Jonathan Strange and Mr Norrell* on BBC One - might not necessarily bode well for the future of British genre TV. But that's something we can discuss next month...

BATES MOTEL

There are no better acting performances anywhere on TV in the moment than Vera Farmiga and Freddie Highmore in A&E's extraordinary **Psycho** prequel **Bates Motel** (thrown away in some ungodly late-night slot on Universal in the UK). This isn't open to debate, by the way; it's just a *fact*. A couple of months ago, Sir Andrew of Pollard, gatekeeping this column in my temporary absence, looked forward to Season Three of this intense, edgy and utterly compelling series and I'm pleased to report that this third run has elevated the show into that rarefied strata of extraordinary quality previously only occupied by the likes of (early) **Dexter** and all of **Breaking Bad**; and maybe a few others I'm far too lazy and full of Wispa Golds to recall at the moment.

Bates Motel is a stunningly-constructed series which expertly toys with our foreknowledge of what's in store for both Norma (Farmiga) and her deeply troubled son Norman (Highmore) and Season Three subtly edges both characters - Norman especially as (spoiler alert) Norma was already a bag o'bones by the time we finally met her in **Psycho** - into places we recognise from the characters' mythologies. As usual, Season Three has its own underlying stories; Norma continues to battle against the building of a bypass that will effectively kill her (sinister) motel business, her once-estranged son Dylan (Max Thieriot) trying to reconcile both himself and Norma with his father Caleb (Kenny Johnson) who is also, gruesomely, Norma's brother (having repeatedly raped his sister during their youth), and the attempts of corrupt local businessman Bob Parris to recover a USB stick which has come, circuitously, into Norma's possession and contains compromising information regarding revenue obtained from drug trafficking.

But much of this is just colour to the show's main dramatic thrust, which remains the disturbing relationship between Norman and Norma which the third season has really kicked into orbit. Mother and son both realise and acknowledge that Norman isn't "quite right", Norman has improper thoughts about his mother (hardly helped by the fact that they climb into each other's beds and moon over each other with worrying regularly) and Norma is trying to keep her slowly disintegrating life together. Farmiga and Highmore just knock it right out of the park week after week and Season Three's 'mini-arc' of episodes in which Norma goes off the rails when Dylan suggests that she meet with Caleb are just masterclasses in television scriptwriting and performance. Farmiga especially is just astonishing as she rages out of Bates Motel and does everything within her power to change her look and her life... but in the end, she's drawn back to Norman because she just can't let him go. Highmore, too, is quite extraordinary; a brooding, complex and sometimes beautifully underplayed portrayal of a potentially monstrously troubled youth who is both pitiful and pitiable. These two set the bar so high for modern TV performances that everyone else might just as well pack up and go home. Which is exactly what I'm going to do *right now*...

Contact me via the magic of email – ***paul.mount@starburstmagazine.com*** *or do the Twitter thing -* ***@PMount***

BATES MOTEL

it's only a movie

a column by JORDAN ROYCE

PRAY THAT HE'S OUT THERE...SOMEWHERE!

As I have previously stated in the STARBURST issue 412 editorial, Mad Max 2 is a movie that had an enormous impact on me when it was introduced to me by this very column. It was a real game changer. A frenetic action rollercoaster that created the whole Road Warrior concept of post-apocalyptic, tribal, auto combat. Sadly, probably due to the practicalities and costs involved, mainly due to the ravenous need for real vehicles in the production costs, the cinema did not exactly explode with Mad Max clones (aside from the poorly-received Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome). This was still a genre rich for further exploitation. Thankfully for us, the godfather of road rage has finally delivered his opus...

Mad Max: Fury Road is a movie that really shouldn't exist. It's been a tortuous 17 years since the idea originally germinated as the then-titled Mad Max 4. Having first surfaced as a possibility back in 1998 (actually the year I opened the Fab Café in Manchester), it was quickly derailed by a pincer movement. The events of 9/11, coupled with a collapse in the value of the US dollar against the Aussie dollar, which added another third to the estimated production costs almost overnight, put the project in jeopardy. Things then went from bad to worse with a DUI arrest marking the beginning of a disastrous period for Mel Gibson. It just seemed likely that the Mad Max trilogy would remain as a part of eighties cinema, and hope of any future instalments seemed like a pipe dream. Yet here we are.

MM:FR begins in the near future. No cities or civilisations have survived intact. People are dying of thirst and skin cancer. Gasoline is fought over and hoarded. Max Rockatansky is already looking worse for wear when in the opening moments he is captured by a bunch of War Boys, and taken to The Citadel presided over by festering fatso, Immortan Joe. Max is unceremoniously shorn of his wild man of Borneo look, given some extensive tats, and ends up strapped to the front of War Boy Nux's motor, for use as a blood bag. Meanwhile, Furiosa sets off in the awesome War Rig under the pretence of collecting gasoline, but has actually taken the five wives of Immortan Joe, with the intention of buggering off with them to a new life. Fatty Joe gets a right monk on and sends the War Boys after them, and hilarity ensues. Well, not really hilarity, to be honest...

This incredibly short set-up kicks off a mammoth road chase/war that continues right up until the closing moments of the film. With 2015 already being an amazing year for genre cinema so far, I am relieved to say that MM:FR continues this trend of imaginative, quality film output. As a follow-up to the earlier Mad Max movies, it delivers everything you could have expected, and it is a powerhouse movie in its own right. MM:FR is so much better than I could have thought possible, and George Miller has managed to make a movie that feels like it was made in the early eighties, but with modern day production aesthetics.

It's a movie that takes no prisoners. It tosses you in at the deep end of the mythology, and it's up to you whether you sink or swim. It's made with all the passion and fervour of a director who clearly didn't compromise one iota. It's as if he never stopped making these movies, and has been carefully developing and honing this universe. The fact that he has done it in a vacuum of audience feedback until now, and managed to produce this bad boy is astonishing. It's an opera of tribalism and punky cars, delivered with a seriously bad attitude!

MM:FR is certainly overshadowed by the vehicle designs, but the cast is never left in the shade. Firstly, with regards to Tom Hardy, I was relieved that he is playing our Max Rockatansky. No shit bag shuffle here. Not his son, nor a reboot. Max is really back! Tom boy does a good job with a few reservations that I will get to later. If there is a breakout performance, though, it has to be Charlize Theron as Imperator Furiosa. Her character was tough as nails, but with just enough vulnerability on show to retain the audience sympathy. It's just a shame that the effects guys couldn't quite figure out how long her stumpy arm was. It did actually grow back a bit towards the end of the movie! Nicholas Hoult as Nux was an interesting character. Again, played with just the right amount of pathos to engender some audience support for his sad plight. The naming of his tumours being a definite cinema first! Then there is cock rock frontman Immortan Joe. Hugh Keays-Byrne, the original Toecutter, wisely choosing to play it over the top but with a straight face.

The cast, when combined with the aforementioned vehicle designs and the action sequences, kick MM:FR into the stratosphere. And those action sequences are simply pitch perfect. Visually stunning. Overly complex in ambition, yet every motion and consequence is clearly conveyed to the audience. Every character's actions are crystal clear (which is not easy with a mostly bald

headed ensemble). This clarity and smoothness allows you to easily absorb the stunning visual aesthetic as it assaults your senses. There are so many amazing scenes in this movie that a second and third viewing is almost obligatory.

Despite the creative overload onscreen, I still have a few high points. I just loved the way that the tribal nature of this fallen civilisation was poetically captured by the presence of the awesome Doof Warrior bashing out flaming power chords on his Doof Wagon of on-board drummers. Providing the perfect marching band for this post-apocalyptic road army. It put a grin on my mush every time he let rip with the flames. I really need one of these to follow me into Manchester each day!

MM:FR is close to insane. 150 real vehicles, explosions, practical effects, and a posse of cameras soaking up every moment. This should be an unholy mess; instead, it's a modern day classic. Shrugging off protestations of implausibility like bugs impacting on the vehicle bonnets. The way that Miller weaves complex story elements into an ongoing visual action vista is close to genius in my opinion. Miller has quoted the great Alfred Hitchcock when questioned about this style of filmmaking, insisting that his intention with this flick is that it could be watched in Japan without subtitles. I might be tempted to watch it with the sound off to see if he has actually succeeded, but I did get way more story from the visuals than dialogue. You can tell that Miller did indeed design the entire movie via storyboarding. Utilising a gob-smacking 3,500 panels drawn by five different artists. The end result is a tight visual flow that perfectly regulates the pacing throughout. This type of visual storytelling has rarely been handled better than it is in MM:FR. Visuals are the driving medium, and anyone who appreciated the establishing character shot in Donnie Darko will understand how potent this approach can be in the hands of a skilled director like George Miller.

So how did I think Mad Max himself fared as a character? Well, I think that Tom Hardy was pretty much the only actor that I could envisage taking over from Mel Gibson, and once he got that bloody face grate off and I could understand what he was saying, he grew into the role nicely. By the end of all this carnage I had pretty much accepted that he was the real deal. But seriously, that face grating did my head in. I just wanted to rip it off him. I never knew I suffered from face grate claustrophobia!

Face Grate Claustrophobia - A post-apocalyptic malady!

Instantly the daily commute became way more bearable...

It was important that someone did the role of Max justice. Max Rockatansky is the definitive reluctant anti-hero. Only out for himself, but often getting drawn into events, and saving the day despite himself. This is a character prevalent throughout the history of cinema and probably most notably encapsulated by Clint Eastwood with his Man with No Name character. It's not an easy role to carry off, but Mr Hardy does seem to have the chops after all. His Max is very similar to Gibson's interpretation. Tough, mean, and scary as hell once he is literally let off the leash. Yet Miller only ever hints at the savage beast within Max. In fact, he only lives up to his nickname once in a gruesome battle occurring off screen. A battle so bloody that we can only imagine the atrocities inflicted on his opponents, as Max washes away all traces with the aid of some titty milk.

Mel Gibson versus Tom Hardy? I think Gibson in Mad Max 2 still rules the roost, but a few more outings for Tom Hardy in the role is definitely something to get excited about.

When I initially heard that this instalment was an intra-sequel, I rolled my eyes. Yet it really doesn't matter in the grand scheme of things. It could conceivably take place in-between Mad Max 2 and Mad Max Beyond Thunderdome, but could also be seen as a reimagining. It certainly features flashbacks that retain the origin story of child loss, but there are some subtle differences that suggest Miller is leaving his options open. Now he has a hit on his hands he could easily just deviate, assert this as a new trilogy, and start to tell a different saga entirely. Had this been a flop at the box office then it would have been just as easy to let this entry remain slotted in-between the previous movies. It is yet another smart move from Miller in a movie full of them.

So what exactly was all the macho kick-off about this movie and it's overtly feminist agenda about? Well, this mostly stems from the fact that some guys like strong females, but only when they are chained up by a dominatrix and being repeatedly chastised for being a naughty little boy. Otherwise they can just be quiet, do the cooking, washing up, and occasionally drop a baby from between their legs. Guys like this were always going to have a problem with a character like that portrayed by Charlize Theron. Furiosa does take centre stage in this flick, but Max is only side-lined to the same extent that he was in Mad Max 2. Max was simply engulfed in the madness. In MM:FR, Max again is not the focus of the movie; it is the journey of Furiosa, and the liberation of The Citadel. Max is along for the ride. Probably the key scene that kicked off this nonsense is when Max misses a shot, and with one bullet left offers himself up as a shoulder rest for Furiosa who then takes the shot successfully. Surely this only shows that Max is capable of putting aside pride and allowing the better option to prevail. But some guys see this as Max being a bit of a pussy. It is actually hard to believe that we are living in 2015 when you hear crap like this even being discussed.

MM:FR is an incredible genre entry, and is one of the best films I have seen this decade. It will be hard for another movie to top this one for me (yes, even that one due out at Christmas). I never expected it to be this good. It's that rare beast. A totally original creation, despite it belonging to an already established mythos. The best praise I can offer up is that it reminds me greatly of Buster Keaton's 1928 ground-breaking opus The General, but even Buster didn't have a Doof Wagon!

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